



Old Cap Collier

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HUNTER,
The Montreal Detective:
OR,
"PIPING" THE RIEL AVENGERS.

By the Author of "Old Cap. Collier."

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NORMAN L. MUNRO, PUBLISHER,
24 AND 26 VANDEWATER ST.



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CHAPTER I.

It was a day to be remembered.

Twenty thousand people surged to and fro in the public square called the Champ de Mars, in Montreal.

Speakers mounted the platform, and each in turn denounced the existing government.

Not one of them mentioned a public officer by name, but all knew who was meant.

The crowd, most of whom were French residents, was almost wild with enthusiasm.

"*Vive la peuple!*"

Such was the cry from the hoarse throats of the people.

Suddenly a commotion was observed among those who were nearest the platform.

The crowd gave way, to the right and left.

A girl, young and beautiful, appeared.

At a glance she could be told as a half-breed; that is to say, the offspring of a union between a Frenchman and one of the native Indians.

The people seemed to know her.

They called out loudly:

"Manette--Manette!"

A young man sprung out from the crowd.

He caught her arm, and called to her:

"Manette! are you mad?"

She turned and looked at him.

Then she cried passionately:

"Mad? No; I would to Heaven that you were as mad in this same cause as I am."

The crowd surged toward them saying:

"Down with him! What business has he to touch Manette?"

The girl raised her olive-tinted hands and waved them off.

She cried out in a clear, ringing voice:

"Don't touch him! Whoever touches him with harmful thoughts, must touch me first, instead."

A man who was standing by, with his face muffled in his cloak and slouch hat, muttered:

"They're lovers, or my name is not Hunter."

He watched everything intently.

The girl continued, whispering to the man who had come out of the crowd and caught hold of her:

"Let me go, Frank!"

Her tone was imperative.

He dropped her arm. She bounded forward in front of the platform.

In her hand she carried a small flag, which she unfurled and waved in the breeze.

Three words were painted on it.

She swung it around her head, and cried out in that sweet, penetrating voice of hers:

"You cannot all see what is written upon it. It is the watchword: 'Riel and Vengeance!'"

A hoarse roar welled up from the crowd.

Suddenly it was stilled.

The crowd parted right and left and a body of mounted police rode through.

They drew up, in military order, in front of the platform.

There was a murmur of discontent from the people.

The officer in command said, quietly:

"I am not here to create disturbance, only to prevent it."

Before he uttered those words the man in the cloak and slouched hat sprung forward.

He said to the young man who stood beside Manette:

"Take her away. This is no place for her. There may be trouble between the citizens and troops."

Both caught her, one on each side, and almost carried her through the crowd, which, the business being over, was already beginning to disperse.

When they were comparatively alone again, the man in the cloak said:

"I must leave you here."

"Why?"

"I have business elsewhere."

The young man replied:

"You have been of service to us. Will you not tell me who we have to thank?"

"Hunter."

And he continued:

"What is your name?"

"Frank Fearless."

"Not a native of Canada?"

"No."

"The United States?"

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Fearless, I will give you some advice. Keep Miss Manette Levere, hereafter, away from such crowds as that."

"Ah! you know her name?"

"Who does not that lives in Montreal?"

Without waiting for an answer, Hunter turned and strode away, his black slouched hat pulled

down low over his eyes, and the collar of his coat turned up.

Hunter did not go far from the couple who were sauntering away.

When about half a block off he turned and followed them, keeping always about the same distance behind.

They entered one of the fashionable streets.

Stopping before one of the most elegant houses, Manette rang the bell, and she and the young man were admitted.

Hardly had they entered when two men approached the house and went in.

One of them was young and handsome, with a dissipated look.

The other was past middle age, with a miserly expression of countenance.

The younger was, Henri Levere, the brother of Manette.

The elder was named Ford, and usually called beyond his hearing, Miser Ford.

Hunter stopped opposite the door.

He said to himself:

"I should like to go in there. I believe that much of the secret I have been detailed to discover lies hidden there."

He hesitated a moment.

Then he took out a skeleton key, unlocked the door and entered the house.

There were three rooms on the right hand side of the hall.

From the crevices underneath the doors of two of these a light shone.

Hunter went into the third room, which was between the two.

He listened intently.

Then he walked softly in the darkness to the door which led into the front room.

Henri and Ford were conversing.

Ford was saying:

"All goes well?"

"It does."

"The demonstration in the square was a success?"

"It was. Did you hear that deuce of a row Manette kicked up?"

"Who could help it?"

"Little fool!"

Ford laughed, saying:

"I've a notion of marrying Manette."

"Marrying Manette?"

"Yes."

"You!"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"You're old enough to be her grandfather."

"Is that all?"

"You don't love her."

"How do you know?"

"You love nothing but your money-bags."

"H'm!"

"Again, she wouldn't have you."

"Oh, yes, she would, with the influence that could be brought to bear."

"What influence?"

"That of yourself and father."

The face of Henri flushed. He said:

"You won't get that."

"Oh, yes, I will."

Henri Levere was not naturally a bad young man, as young men go.

Neither was Ford called so. He worshiped money, but had never been known to descend to trickery to gain it.

They looked at each other earnestly.

Henri was the first to speak, saying:

"Old man, you have an object to gain in wishing to marry Manette. That is, if you're in earnest."

"Never more so."

"Then what's your object?"

"She is beautiful."

"Pshaw!"

"Will you help me?"

"No."

"You shall!"

Henri sprang to his feet, saying:

"Do you threaten?"

"Yes."

Ford continued:

"Keep cool. I happen to know something of a little transaction of yours, made nearly a month ago."

Young Levere started. But he recovered himself quickly, and said:

"What was the transaction?"

"You made a note for a thousand dollars."

"What of that?"

"You had the note discounted at the bank."

"Well?"

"You signed the note."

"I had a right to."

"But you had no right to sign my name as your indorser."

Henri sprang to his feet.

He cried out loudly:

"What!"

The miser replied coolly:

"Don't excite yourself. *I have the note!*"

"You—have?"

"Certainly. It will fall due to-morrow. You have the money, I hope, to meet it?"

Henri had become as pale as death. He sank down into his chair, gasping:

"I have."

He saw the uselessness of denial. He *had* forged the indorsement, knowing that he would have the money to meet it when it was due.

The miser saw his hesitation, and continued:

"I paid a thousand dollars for the note. I did not speak of the forgery. It remains with you whether I shall do so or not."

"I'll pay it."

"That isn't the question."

"What is, then?"

"Your sister."

"Ah!"

"I love your sister. I have told you so. It is the truth. Use your influence with your sister and father in my behalf. If you don't, I'll tell your father, and break his heart. I'll tell your invalid mother; it will kill her. I'll hand you over to the law, and you'll rot in prison. Quick! What do you say?"

Henri groaned. The veins in his forehead stood out like cords.

He asked, suddenly:

"Did you say you have the note?"

"Yes."

The young man was desperate. He hardly knew what he did, in his excitement.

In his despair he sprang upon the miser.

He clutched him by the throat, crying out:

"Give me the note, or I'll strangle you."

Ford with a great effort threw him off.

He said, hoarsely:

"Fool! did you think I would bring the note here?"

Henri realized his folly. He said, faintly:

"Pardon me—I was half crazy."

The miser replied, quietly:

"Frank Fearless is Manette's lover. He is now in the back room with her. He is a rascal, and I can prove it. Tell him so. He shall be behind the bars before to-morrow night."

These words were spoken so low as to reach no further than Henri's ear.

Ford continued, in a louder tone:

"Go and forbid him the house."

"When?"

"Now!"
 Henri left the apartment.
 He went into the back room without knocking.
 Fearless and Manette were seated on a sofa.
 Frank arose as he entered.
 Henri pointed to the open door, and said:
 "Your way lies there!"
 "What do you mean?"
 "That you're to leave this house."
 The color mounted to the face of Fearless, but he responded calmly:
 "Not at *your* bidding."
 "You won't go?"
 "No."
 "I'm master here."
 "I think not. When your father or sister tells me to go, I'll not stay long."
 For the moment, surprise had seemingly taken away Manette's breath.
 Now she recovered, and said quickly:
 "Henri, you're mad!"
 "Be quiet, Manette."
 "Why do you order him out of the house?"
 "Because he's a rascal, and you'll know it before to-morrow night."
 Manette clasped her hands and cried out:
 "Henri—Henri!"
 "Come, are you going?"
 "Not at *your* bidding."
 "Then, by Heaven! I'll throw you out."
 He advanced a step.
 Fearless drew himself up proudly; his face was pale, as, standing at his full height, he said:
 "You'll throw me out! Lay but a finger on me, and I'll throw you through that window."

CHAPTER II.

AT ten o'clock on the morning of the day on which the previous events happened, a man approached the door of the private office of the manager of the principal detective agency in Montreal.

The man said to the person who was on guard at the door:

"Is the manager in?"

"Yes."

And the guard continued:

"Do you wish to see him?"

"I guess so."

"What name?"

"Never mind. I come on business. Just show me in."

The guard hesitated.

The man turned down the lapel of his coat.

The guard said:

"Certainly."

He threw open the door.

The man entered, and said to the manager:

"You see I am here."

The manager looked at him curiously:

He said, grimly:

"Yes, I see. What is your business?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"No, you sent for me, and I am here. It is for you to tell me your business with me."

The manager looked surprised and said:

"I have no business with you."

"Yes, you have."

The manager looked astonished. He eyed the man suspiciously, and said:

"You're crazy."

He reached out his hand to touch the bell, when the man said:

"Don't do that."

And at the same instant he threw off a flowing beard that covered his face, exclaiming:

"Fooled again."

"Hunter!"

"The same."

"You're the arch-fiend himself at disguises."

He continued:

"I forgive you. Sit down. To you, as the chief detective of the bureau, I wish to intrust the most important case of the day."

"And that is—"

"The Riel business."

"What about it? the man has been hanged."

"But he has avengers."

"Ah!"

"Yes. Didn't you know it?"

"Yes."

"The object of the avengers is to overthrow the government."

"I am aware of that."

"Hunter, you are to work up the case."

"What case?"

"To ferret out the conspirators."

"It is not to my liking."

"Why not?"

Hunter responded:

"Riel was executed because he was the leader of the half-breeds."

"Certainly."

"His people were suffering wrongs."

"We have nothing to do with that."

"H'm!"

"They are seeking to overthrow the government. If they succeed, many innocent people must suffer."

"That is true."

"They are to hold a meeting in the Champ de Mars to-day."

"I am aware of it."

"But they will make no riotous demonstrations. They wish to inflame the minds of the people by public meetings, but all the important business, until they are ready to strike, will be in secret."

"How do you know?"

"I think so. Will you undertake the job?"

"If I am ordered to."

"Well, then, you're ordered to."

Hunter arose, saying:

"Have you any instructions to give?"

"None."

The detective left the office, and, as we have seen, attended the great demonstration in the square.

He had a most difficult task, and as he had said to the manager, it was not half to his liking; but as he had said to the manager more than once, when he undertook the management of a case, he held his grip like a sleuthhound, and never relaxed his exertions until the prey was his.

He did not foresee the complications to which the main thread would lead.

He did not imagine the dangers into which it would lead him, or the narrow escapes through which he would have to pass.

Having explained to the reader the reason why Hunter was acting as he was recorded to have done in the preceding chapter, we will leave him secreted in the inner room, and return to the moment when Henri and young Fearless stood confronting each other.

Henri was desperate.

He did not, under the terrible circumstances in which he was placed by the miser, dare refuse to obey the commands of Ford.

Fearless stood erect and calm.

Henri, terribly excited, was crouching down and ready to spring.

The detective at this time was looking through a small crack in the door, and could see all that passed between them.

He smiled grimly and thought:

"If it comes to a tussle I think the young Yankee will throw him through the window as he threatened to do."

Manette threw herself between them.

She cried out passionately:

"My lover and my brother *shall not fight!*"

Henri's arm fell to his side.

He said:

"Do you, then, admit it?"

Fearless replied calmly:

"We love each other; that is enough."

Henri was, perhaps, glad of an excuse for not pushing matters further with his powerful young antagonist.

At any rate he made no further demonstration of hostility.

He said to his sister fiercely:

"Do you love this man?"

"Yes."

"He is a rascal."

"He is not."

"I can prove it."

"You lie!" said Fearless.

The veins in Henri's forehead stood out more prominently.

He said fiercely:

"Wait until to-morrow."

Fearless laughed.

Henri exclaimed passionately:

"He laughs best who laughs last."

He turned and left the room.

And at the doorway he stopped and said:

"Hark you, Manette; if I prove that man a villain, will you renounce him?"

Fearless' arm was around her waist. He now bent down and kissed her.

Henri gnashed his teeth. The fear of Ford consumed him. In his present state he would have given all he had in the world to see Fearless lying dead at his feet.

He shook his fist at Fearless, saying, in a voice that was choked with anger:

"Wait until to-morrow!"

He returned to Ford and detailed all that had occurred.

The miser laughed.

"Ha, ha! She won't give him up, eh?"

"No."

"Suppose he is proven to be one of the greatest rascals and most ungrateful men that walk the streets?"

"Then she would give him up."

"How do you know?"

"She has pride."

"And wouldn't marry a man who has a stain upon his name?"

"No."

Again the miser chuckled, saying, as he rubbed his hard palms one upon the other:

"Never fear, my Henri, he'll be in jail, to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

"MANETTE, what does it mean?"

"I don't know, Frank."

"Henri was always my friend before."

"I am sure of it."

"And now he orders me out of the house like a dog."

He took her in his arms as he continued:

"He loves my sister, why may I not love his?"

"You say you love me?"

"Heaven knows how well."

"Then prove it."

The young man exclaimed passionately:

"My darling! tell me how."

Again the girl hesitated. Then she said quickly:

"You were at the public meeting in the Champ de Mars?"

"Certainly. You saw me there."

The girl continued, becoming more impassioned:

"It was called to give utterance to my people's wrongs."

"I know it."

"Wrongs which culminated in the hanging of their leader."

Manette continued, excitedly:

"The meeting was organized by the direction of a secret league, composed of the best men and women of the Dominion."

"Women?"

"Yes, women. And of those women I am proud to say that I am one!"

She drew herself up proudly. Her eyes were glowing, she looked at him unflinchingly as she continued:

"And the object of that league is to work a revolution and destroy the existing government."

"Great Heaven! And you belong to it? You, a delicate young girl?"

"I and my father. Will you betray us?"

He looked at her reproachfully, saying:

"You know I'll not."

She continued:

"The league has secret spies out in all directions throughout the land. And when all's ready, let the government beware."

"Manette, what has this to do with love?"

"Much."

"Explain."

She said more calmly:

"First, Frank, you will admit that if my father joins a secret society it cannot be wrong."

"No, for he is one of the best of men."

"And I would not be likely to do anything that I thought wrong."

"Certainly not, Manette."

She dropped her air of excitement entirely and said, appealingly:

"Frank!"

"Well?"

"I want you to join the secret league."

"I, Manette! join in a plot to disrupt the government! I am a citizen of the United States. What have I to do with it?"

"It has much to do with you."

"What do you mean?"

Manette was very pale. But she said calmly:

"I mean that if you refuse the first request I ever made of you, I'll think you never loved me."

"Manette, my darling!"

Then she became tender and commenced to coax him.

She turned all her blandishments and endearments upon him, as only a loving woman can.

And she really did love him with all the strength of her passionate nature.

"Frank!" she cried at last, "do as I ask you. I'll love you as no man was ever loved before. My people are in the right. Only join us, Frank, and your very lightest wish shall be my law."

This, as she hung upon him, her splendid eyes fixed full upon him, her beautiful hair floating about him, and her arms around his neck.

"Manette," he said.

"I listen, Frank."

"Can you trust me perfectly?"

"Forever."

"I will not go into this thing blindfold. Introduce me into the secret league. Let me see its workings. If I join, my whole soul will be given to the cause. If I decline, I'll prove no spy."

She cried out fondly:

"I'm content. Then we can work together, dear. You'll join! You'll join!"

After that she was more affectionate than he had ever known her.

And when he went away at midnight, there was in his heart a feeling of joy and elation which he had never known before.

Hunter had, some time before this, stealthily left the house.

He was too honorable to listen to the lovers after they ceased talking about the secret league.

He had already heard enough to give him a clew to the solution of the business he had in hand.

Besides, he had another trail to follow that night, the particulars and result of which will be given in their proper place.

Fearless was in the employ of Lawson & Co., merchants.

Lawson was the half-brother of Manette's father, but who the "Co." was was left to conjecture.

It was generally supposed, however, to be Mr. Levere.

On his way home Fearless passed the store of his employer.

As he was passing he thought he heard a noise. He stopped and listened, but could hear nothing more.

He was not satisfied.

He opened the door with the key he always carried, and went inside.

All was dark there.

He lighted the gas and looked around.

Everything was right. The place was silent as the tomb.

He said to himself:

"I was mistaken."

Locking the door again he went home.

Fearless and his sister lived in a small house not far from the store.

At the door of an inner room a young girl met him.

Kissing him fondly, she said:

"Brother Frank, you're very late to-night."

Kate Fearless was one of the most beautiful girls in Montreal.

Left an orphan at an early age, she had since then only her brother to depend upon.

He had fulfilled his trust well.

Educating her out of his slender means, he had kept her at school until she graduated with all the accomplishments which a young lady obtains at a first-class seminary.

Now she was his housekeeper; and with one servant they lived together happily.

There were few secrets between the brother and sister.

Frank related all that had passed between him and Henri, but said nothing about the secret league, because that would have been to betray Manette.

Kate was astonished.

She said in a troubled tone:

"Did he give any reason?"

"None; except to say that I would be proved a rascal before to-morrow night."

The girl said almost in a whisper:

"You know that Henri and I love each other?"

"I do."

"And that he has asked me to be his wife?"

"Yes."

Her eyes filled with tears as she said:

"That can never be now, unless——"

"Unless what, Kate?"

"Frank, since father died you have been both father and brother to me. All I am I owe to you, and I know how hard you worked for me. Unless he apologizes to me, I'll never be his wife."

Then she broke down, and covering her face, commenced to cry.

Frank soothed her until she became calmer.

"We'll take the night to think about it," he said.

"Come, now, to bed, Kate, and a light heart in the morning."

Frank got no sleep that night.

All night long he tossed upon his bed, and when morning came it found him pale and haggard.

Uneasiness oppressed him.

He found it a relief to get out into the open air, and walked around until nine o'clock.

He then went home to breakfast.

Kate met him at the table, saying:

"Late again, Frank."

She, too, had been thinking. She looked pale, but smiled sweetly.

The door-bell rang a moment afterward. Two men were shown into the room.

Fearless knew neither of them.

He arose and said brusquely:

"What is your business, gentlemen?"

"We're officers."

"What do you want?"

"You?"

"Me?"

"That's it; you've hit it first time. We've a warrant to arrest you."

"For what?"

"Robbing your employer's safe last night."

For a moment Fearless looked as if he was about to rush upon the men.

One of them said:

"None of that, or we'll slap the darbies on you."

Kate Fearless sprang between them.

"Don't!" she cried. "He has committed no crime! My brother could not rob his employer's safe! It's all a horrible mistake—surely you won't arrest him!"

One of the men said, more kindly:

"Sorry, miss, but we can't help it. You see, we've got our orders, and must obey 'em."

Frank burst into a laugh, saying:

"That will do, Kate. Of course it's a mistake. These men have committed a ridiculous blunder. I'll go with them and correct it."

His laugh and the lightness of his words calmed her.

"Send me word soon, Frank."

"I'll bring it to you, and we'll laugh together."

By this time the court was open for the day.

Fearless was led before the judge, who said:

"Are you Frank Fearless?"

"I am."

"You are accused of burglary."

"I so understand."

Mr. Lawson came forward and asked the judge:

"Is it necessary to conduct the examination publicly?"

"It had better be so."

Mr. Lawson continued, with some feeling:

"I do not care to prosecute, if he will confess and restore the money."

Fearless asked, calmly:

"What money?"

The judge replied for Mr. Lawson:

"The thousand dollars you took from the safe."

"I deny taking it."

Hunter, the detective, was in the courtroom.

He had come on business, early, and as he was leaving saw Fearless brought in.

He instantly took a seat near the rail, and said to himself:

"What has Manette's lover been up to?"

Ford was also there. He observed the proceedings intently, and occasionally a smile would flit over his face.

The judge continued:

"A thousand dollars was brought into the store after banking hours."

"That is true."

"You put it in the safe?"

"I did."

"The safe has a combination lock. Only you and Mr. Lawson knew the combination."

"We are all, sir."

"The safe was not handled with tools. It was found locked this morning. The combination was all right. You were seen to stop in front of the

store at a late hour—after midnight, in fact—last night, and glance stealthily around.”

“I deny glancing stealthily around.”

“You entered the store, remained there a few minutes, then came out and walked away. You were seen to do so.”

“I don’t deny it.”

“Why did you enter the store at that hour?”

“I thought I heard a noise, and went in to investigate.”

“And found everything right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you ever enter the store before at that hour of the night?”

“No, sir.”

The judge looked grave.

He said:

“The case looks bad against you.”

“It seems so.”

“It is my duty to commit you to prison.”

Fearless turned pale.

He exclaimed:

“Great Heaven! to prison!”

“Yes, in default of five thousand dollars’ bail, to await the action of the grand jury.”

“But I am innocent.”

“I sincerely hope you will be able to prove it.”

An officer placed a hand on his shoulder, saying:

“The prison van waits.”

Fearless shuddered, and said:

“Can’t I walk?”

“It is not allowed.”

They had taken one step, when there was a commotion in the audience.

A girl sprung down the aisle and took her stand beside the prisoner.

Her face was pale as his. But her voice did not falter as she looked defiantly at the audience and cried out:

“To prison! No! I say it shall not be, for there is better work for him to do than that!”

CHAPTER IV.

It was Manette.

She was early in the street that morning, and as she passed the courthouse, saw Frank Fearless led in between the officers.

Going into the court, she sat down at the back end of the room and listened to the whole of the examination.

Her impulsiveness asserted itself, as it had at the meeting in the Champ de Mars the day before.

Unused to control her feelings, she had sprung up and run to the prisoner with the exclamation recorded at the end of the last chapter.

She faced the judge boldly. A spot of red appeared in either cheek, as she said:

“Sir, you said you wanted five thousand dollars’ bail. Will that release him?”

The judge knew her well as the daughter of Mr. Levere, one of the richest and most respected men in the city.

He replied, politely:

“For the present, yes.”

“Then I’ll go his bail, sir.”

“I’m afraid you’re not qualified, Miss Manette.”

Manette drew herself up proudly, as she replied:

“I am worth a hundred thousand dollars in my own right.”

“How old are you, Miss Manette?”

“Nineteen.”

“You cannot be accepted. You are not of legal age to make a contract.”

Fearless bent down, and whispered:

“Go away, Manette. God bless you, my darling, for your intercession.”

She replied, in the same low whisper:

“I’ll get the money, Frank. They can’t refuse that.”

“Don’t trouble yourself, Manette.”

She whispered, passionately:

“Trouble myself! I love you too well to let you remain in prison.”

“Heaven bless you, Manette.”

She whispered, still lower:

“And the league wants you, too, Frank—the secret league formed to avenge my people.”

The judge said:

“Remove the prisoner.”

Manette would have said more, but Fearless whispered hurriedly:

“Be calm, Manette, for my sake; say no more.”

They led the prisoner out of court.

The judge said kindly:

“Miss Manette, this is no place for you.”

With bowed head Manette went away, to hasten hurriedly on her self-imposed mission to set her lover free.

Hunter, the detective, had been an attentive listener to all that passed.

The dramatic entrance of Manette had caused him to start with surprise at first, but he instantly resumed his calm demeanor, which did not again desert him.

After the exit of Manette, he went out of court and hurried to his own rooms.

His intention was to go and see Kate Fearless.

But he intended to thoroughly disguise himself, for the following reason:

His intention was to ferret out the mystery of the robbery of the safe.

To do this he would be obliged to show himself to Fearless if Manette succeeded in having him released on bail.

And if Fearless joined the secret league—as he had no doubt would be the case, for he would not be able to refuse Manette anything after that—he would have to work in an entirely different manner.

In fact, he would have to play a double part.

He would have to work for Fearless in the safe robbery, and *against* him in the Riel conspiracy.

That being the case, he thought it well to have two strings to his bow; that is to say, two names and two disguises.

Having completed his preparations, he went to the house, asked to see Miss Fearless, and was shown into the small parlor.

Manette soon entered.

Hunter arose and said:

“Have I the pleasure of addressing Miss Kate Fearless?”

“That is my name, sir.”

Then, as if suddenly divining his purpose, she exclaimed:

“You come to tell me about my brother?”

“I have.”

“And he is——”

“In prison.”

“Oh, Heaven!”

Her lovely face became pale as death, and she wrung her hands as she sank down upon a sofa.

Hunter said kindly:

“Be calm; I have reason to believe that your brother will soon be released on bail.”

He told the story of the scene at the court, and continued:

“But if his innocence is not established he will be convicted and sent to prison for many years.”

“Oh, sir, he is innocent!”

“I believe you.”

“But who will prove it?”

“I will try to.”

“You?”

“Yes. I am a detective.”

Then, as he saw the expression of alarm that overspread her face, he continued:

"Don't be alarmed. We are not so black as we are painted. We hunt down the guilty, but protect the innocent."

"Will you tell me your name?"

"Call me Jackson. A letter directed to police headquarters will always reach me."

She looked at him intently, and then said:

"I'll trust you, sir."

"That's good. Now let us have a talk together."

In his remarkable way he learned everything from her, even to her engagement with Henri."

He then said:

"When do you expect Henri here?"

"He comes every day about this time."

"Ah! then I must be quick."

He proceeded to give her some instructions.

The door-bell rang. Kate said:

"It's Henri's ring."

"Where can I conceal myself?"

She pointed to a sliding-door.

He pushed it open, stepped into the other room and closed the door, all but the slightest crevice.

Henri entered the room.

He advanced toward her with outstretched arms.

She waved him back haughtily, saying:

"Come no nearer, Mr. Levere."

He stopped instantly, saying:

"Kate, what is it? What does this mean?"

"If my brother isn't good enough for your house, you are not good enough for his."

The color came into his face. He exclaimed:

"Ah! Has he told you that already?"

Taking no notice of his question, she continued:

"And if my brother is not good enough for your sister, you are not good enough for his."

Henri's face grew paler as he stammered:

"Kate, I didn't mean it."

"Why, then, did you say it?"

"I had been annoyed. I was angry."

"Did anger induce you to say that, before to-night, you'd prove him to be a rascal?"

He tried to answer, but for the moment could only stammer.

"Well," she continued, "the world will now believe you; he is a prisoner; it seems to me, Mr. Levere, that you must have known what would happen last night, or you would never have spoken so positively about to-day."

Just then he lost his guard and said:

"The words were put into my mouth."

"By whom?"

He recovered himself instantly; he saw his mistake, for he did not dare betray the miser. He said, with his eyes cast down:

"By my anger."

"Anger seldom makes so sure a forecast as that."

"Surely, Kate, you don't think—"

She stopped him with a gesture, and exclaimed:

"Now, Henri, hear me. You say you love me. If you do, prove it."

"How can I do that, Kate?"

"That you must find out. But I'll tell you this. If Frank is convicted of that crime, I will never be your wife. I swear it."

"Kate, this is hard."

"So be it. Now go."

His head went down upon his breast; he now began to see the difficulty into which his obedience to the miser's commands had pushed him.

He truly loved Kate Fearless.

To lose her would almost kill him.

But the note—the forged note; if he exerted himself in Frank's favor, he dared not think of the result.

He almost gasped:

"Kate, you're cruel. How can I prove him innocent?"

"You have my ultimatum. Go! and let me see you no more until my brother's name is clear."

He staggered rather than walked out of the room, and she heard him close the outside door.

Then her fortitude forsook her.

She sank almost fainting into a chair, crying:

"Oh, what have I done?"

Hunter went to her. He said quickly:

"You have done well."

"But if you knew what it cost me. Oh, my heart!"

"You have shown yourself a brave, true woman, striving for your brother's good. Courage! if Henri is guilty of any knowledge of the plot, he'll not now dare take any active part against him for fear of losing you. While, if he's innocent, he will work with all his strength to prove your brother's innocence and win you. In any case, it will be to Frank's benefit. I must leave you to follow Henri."

He left her alone, with her heart fighting hard between her brother and her lover.

The detective rushed out of the house in time to see Henri disappear around a corner.

Hunter followed.

Henri did not go far before he met Ford, the miser.

They stood on the corner talking in a low but excited manner.

Then Henri moved moodily away.

Hunter thought:

"Ah! he has been trying to arrange about the note and failed."

Satisfied that Henri was, at the present time, up to no mischief, the detective shadowed Ford.

The miser went on until he reached one of the least frequented streets, where he stopped.

Leaning against a tree, he seemed to be waiting for some one.

The detective dodged into a doorway and watched.

In a few minutes Ford was joined by a peculiar-looking person.

He was not more than four feet and a half high, and slender.

His arms were very long and muscular, in proportion to his body.

His face was clean shaven, and had a crafty look.

Altogether, he looked more like a boy than a man, although he was thirty years old.

Hunter had seen this man before.

His cognomen, to the police, was Breeze, although whether this was his true name or not could not be told.

For a long time he had been an object of suspicion to the police, on account of the belief that he had been concerned in several skillful burglaries.

He had always managed, however, to wriggle out of the meshes of the law.

Like a flash an idea came into the mind of the detective, and he determined to follow it up.

Ford talked to the man a few minutes, and then went on.

Breeze turned off in another direction.

Hunter followed.

Breeze, in his turn, stopped at a certain corner, and seemed to be waiting.

Hunter slipped behind a tree.

After a while the detective was astonished to see Mr. Levere, Manette's father, come up and engage in conversation.

In a few minutes he, too, went on, and Breeze walked off, softly whistling.

The detective, cautiously shadowing him, said to himself:

"Ford wanted to get Frank Fearless out of the way, to remove his rival with Manette. He certainly has an understanding with Breeze. Mr. Levere, according to Manette's confession, is one of

the men engaged in the Riel conspiracy against the government. He, too, has an understanding with Breeze. Two and two make four. I wonder if I can't kill two birds with one stone?"

Breeze went to a house of good appearance, and let himself in with a pass-key.

Hunter waited a quarter of an hour, and did the same with his skeleton-key.

He stood in the hall and listened.

No one was stirring. The house seemed to be deserted.

He opened one door after another.

No one was there.

He opened the last door on the ground floor.

There, at a table in the room, sat Breeze, pouring out a glass of wine.

He sprang up, exclaiming:

"Hallo!"

Hunter rejoined:

"Hallo, yourself. Guess you're alone in the house, ain't you?"

"You're a sneak-thief, eh?"

"Maybe so. Give us a glass of wine."

"I'll give you worse. You infernal sneak-thief, get out!"

As he spoke, Breeze, in spite of his inferior size, leaped at Hunter and caught him by the throat, exclaiming:

"I never knew a sneak-thief that had pluck enough to fight!"

The strength of the little being was amazing, and his agility was marvelous.

He twisted around Hunter like a snake.

Had the detective not been a powerful man he would have got the worst of it.

As it was he had difficulty, owing to the little fellow's agility.

At last he managed to throw him off and fling him to the other side of the room.

Breeze was full of pluck.

He was not inclined to give it up.

He was returning to the attack when Hunter opened his coat and showed his badge.

Breeze recoiled, exclaiming:

"Thunder! A detective."

"The same."

Breeze commenced to whine.

"Now what have I done? What am I wanted for this time?"

"I want the money."

"What money?"

"The thousand dollars you took from Lawson & Co.'s safe last night."

Thrown off his guard for an instant, Breeze turned pale, and exclaimed:

"I haven't got it."

"Who has, then?"

"How do I know?"

"Didn't you take it?"

"No, I didn't."

And Breeze continued with an air of injured innocence:

"It's a blessed shame to hound a little chap like me down so. Everything's laid to me. I don't know anything more about who cracked that crib than you do, and maybe not so much."

Hunter laughed; but letting that branch of the subject drop for the moment, said:

"How about the league?"

"What league?"

"The Riel avengers."

"Don't know anything about 'em."

"You don't?"

"No."

"Don't lie, Breeze."

"I don't know anything about 'em, I tell you."

"Don't they hold secret meetings in this house?"

"No."

"Breeze, do you want to go to jail?"

"Ugh!"

"I see you don't. Well, then, if you don't tell me the truth you'll land there in twenty minutes."

Apparently cowed by this threat, Breeze hesitated, looked down at the floor, and then said:

"To tell you the truth, a lot of men do meet here once or twice a week."

"What's their object?"

"I don't know. They never let me into the room."

"Can't you listen?"

"The doors are too thick."

"Where is the room?"

"Up-stairs."

"I'll take a look at it. And mind you, Breeze, no treachery. You lead the way; I'll follow."

The detective took a pistol from his pocket and motioned Breeze to go ahead.

Up-stairs they went in single file.

Breeze stopped before a door, unlocked it, and entering, said:

"This is where they hang out when they're here."

Satisfied that he was on the right track, Hunter entered the room.

It was large and square.

A long table was in the center, and chairs enough to seat forty persons were there.

Several drawers were in the table.

Hunter tried all of them and found them locked.

There might be secret papers in them which would condemn the league.

The drawers must be opened.

Placing his pistol on the table ready to his hand, the detective took from his pocket his skeleton keys, and commenced operations on the locks.

They were of peculiar pattern, and difficult to manage.

Becoming impatient, Hunter neglected to pay attention to Breeze for a moment, while he bent down closer to the locks.

Breeze had been all the time watching him as a cat watches a mouse, waiting for the time to come to spring.

The moment had come.

Breeze drew from his pocket a small silken rope, like that of a thug, with a noose at one end.

He crept toward Hunter like a cat.

An instant later, he sprang forward and landed on Hunter's back as he leaned over the table.

At the same instant he cast the noose over the detective's head, and pulled it tight around his neck.

Hunter gasped and fell forward upon the table, knocking the pistol to the floor.

Then commenced a terrible struggle.

Each instant the noose was drawn tighter.

Breeze stuck fast to the detective's back and could not be dislodged.

Neither could Hunter get his fingers between his neck and the rope, which the thug was every instant drawing tighter.

Hunter gasped and strangled.

Every instant he grew weaker.

Breeze perceived it, and, with a panting laugh, cried out:

"I have you, man-hunter! I've got you 'dead to rights!'"

CHAPTER V.

HUNTER, the detective, with the dwarf on his back almost choking him, was in an embarrassing and dangerous predicament.

The little man—or, as he might be called, the dwarf—had shown surprising strength for one of his slenderness and short stature.

Combined with this, his remarkable agility made him a formidable antagonist.

He had, moreover, taken Hunter by surprise, and the detective could not free himself, because he could only touch the thug by reaching around behind his back.

With his hands in that position a man can exert but little of his strength.

Hunter had his senses about him.

He was strangling rapidly.

Something else must be attempted, or he would be a dead man.

He instantly devised a plan of action, and it was the only feasible one.

The horse, when it has failed to get rid of its rider, sometimes throws itself over and crushes him.

This plan the detective adopted.

As quick as a flash he threw himself over backward, before the dwarf was prepared for the move.

Hunter fell heavily upon him.

The dwarf relaxed his hold. For an instant he lay stunned, and the time was long enough for Hunter to loose the noose from around his neck and throw it off.

The detective gasped.

He felt weak and faint.

He stood regarding the little man with fury in his looks.

Then he said:

"Thug!"

And he continued:

"You came near fixing me that time."

The dwarf stirred. Hunter looked around for his pistol, and found it on the floor, where it had been knocked from the table.

He bent over the dwarf and said:

"Come, get up!"

The little man opened his eyes.

He arose, and stood looking at the detective vindictively.

Hunter said:

"Hold out your hands. Oh, you won't? We'll see."

He seized the little man's wrists, and, with the adroitness which comes from practice, handcuffed him in a second.

He then placed him in a chair, and said grimly:

"Now, my little friend, what have you to say for yourself?"

The dwarf replied sullenly:

"Nothing."

"Your little plan failed."

"Maybe it won't, next time."

"Do you expect to get another chance?"

"Yes."

"It is impossible. I'll tell you why. I am going to take you to jail."

The dwarf replied, coolly:

"And you'll meet with the same success which all of your ilk have met with before you."

"And that is——"

"Failure to prove anything against me. I've been in no crooked schemes."

The detective laughed and said:

"You forget that, just now, you did your best to strangle me to death."

"The dwarf turned pale. The charge was a serious one, and there was no way out of it.

He weakened instantly, and said:

"I did that in self-defense."

"Self-defense!"

"Yes."

"What physical danger were *you* in?"

The dwarf saw that he had made a mistake.

He said, in correction:

"I was placed here to guard my master's property, and I tried to do it. That's no offense against the law."

"Who is your master?"

"That's my business."

"And mine. You'd better come with me to jail." The dwarf eyed Hunter. He was evidently trying to determine who and what he was.

He said, at last:

"You're a sneak-thief, no matter what you say, and have come here to rob the house. Well, I am powerless, so you can do it and go."

"You're mistaken. I'm a detective."

"H'm!"

"Don't you believe it?"

"No."

"Inspect my badge a little closer. I see that you didn't believe me when I told you so before. I'll tell you again, my name's Hunter."

The dwarf dropped his air of bravado, which he now saw would not avail him.

He asked:

"What terms will you make?"

"The truth, in answer to my questions. And don't lie, because I know much more than you have any idea of."

"What do you want to know?"

"Who is your master?"

The dwarf replied craftily:

"If you know so much you ought to know that."

The detective said, at a venture:

"His name is Levere."

The expression of the face of the dwarf changed. He exclaimed, hurriedly:

"How did you know that?"

"I told you I knew much."

The detective continued:

"Do you admit it?"

"Yes."

"For what purpose does he use the house?"

"I told you before."

"Tell me again."

"As a place of meeting for himself and friends."

"For what purpose do they meet here?"

"I don't know."

"You also told me that before."

"It is the truth."

"You also told me you didn't know when they were to meet here again. That was a lie."

"Upon my word——"

"That's enough. When Levere met you on the street to-day, it was to tell you when they would be here again."

"Thunder! Do you know that, too?"

"I told you I knew a great deal."

"I believe you. Well, they are to meet here to-night."

"At what hour?"

"Nine o'clock."

"Are you sure?"

"Levere said so."

"Very well. You would like to escape jail, where I can certainly send you for attempting to murder me. I will let up on you on certain conditions."

"Name them."

"The first is that you will say nothing about my present call."

"I agree."

"The second is that you let me in, unknown to any one of the company, at half-past nine o'clock to-night."

"I'll lose my job."

"Otherwise you'll lose your liberty."

"I must consent."

"The signal will be three quick, low raps."

"I'll remember."

"Good. I suppose you would like to have those bracelets removed."

"I should say so."

"Wait a minute."

The detective again turned his attention to the interrupted task of picking the locks of the drawers in the desk.

Nothing of a compromising nature was found. He then removed the handcuffs, put them in his pocket, and said:

"Now I'll leave you. And be careful you don't attempt any treachery. If you do, I'll have no more mercy on you than I would on a venomous snake."

Hunter left the house and went to his own room, where he quickly disguised himself in the same way as when he made his appearance to the sister of Frank Fearless under the assumed name of Jackson.

He had no difficulty in procuring admittance to the jail and an interview with Fearless.

The prisoner was sitting on the side of his cot, engaged in deep thought as to how he could solve the knotty problem of proving his innocence.

The reader will remember that in the stormy interview of the night before between Frank and Henri, the latter had said nothing about Ford.

It never then entered the mind of the prisoner that Ford had any hand in the situation in which he was placed.

He arose as the cell was unlocked, and the detective made his appearance.

Hunter had a conversation of some length with the young man.

It was of great importance, and the particulars will be shown in the subsequent actions of the detective and Frank Fearless.

The conference was hardly concluded when the door of the cell was thrown open by the keeper, and a girl entered.

She rushed to Fearless and, throwing her arms around his neck, exclaimed:

"Oh, Frank! My martyr—my love!"

Then she perceived the detective, and drew back blushing and confused.

Manette had come!

CHAPTER VI.

MANETTE, when she left the court after Fearless was committed to prison, hurried home at once.

Her father was just going out.

She stopped him, saying:

"Wait a minute."

"What is it, Manette?"

"Come with me to the library and I'll tell you."

Mr. Levere smiled indulgently.

The girl was his pet, and he was in the habit of indulging her little whims.

When they were in the library, he said:

"Now, Manette."

"I want to speak about Frank Fearless."

"The young American?"

"Yes."

"What of him?"

"He is in jail."

"Impossible! He was here last night."

"He was arrested this morning."

"On what charge?"

Manette told him. Mr. Levere looked grave.

He exclaimed:

"A thief!"

"No."

"How do you know?"

"He is all that is true and honest."

Mr. Levere said, coldly:

"What would you have me do?"

"Release him."

"How?"

"By becoming his bondsman."

"That is impossible."

"Why?"

"Because the robbery of the safe must have been done, according to your story, either by him or his employer."

Manette said impatiently:

"What has that to do with it?"

"Much."

He continued, after reflection:

"What interest would Mr. Lawson have in robbing his own safe of so small an amount of money?"

"What interest, then, would Frank Fearless have?"

"Fearless is poor. A thousand dollars is a good deal of money to a poor man."

"Frank Fearless never took it."

Mr. Levere shrugged his shoulders.

He said, indifferently:

"I am sorry that the young man has succumbed to temptation, but the law must take its course. In this case there is an especial reason why I must so act."

Manette was almost in tears. But she conquered her emotion, and said:

"What is the special reason?"

"The firm is Lawson & Co. I am the 'company.'"

"You?"

"I am the special partner. You will readily see, Manette, that I cannot go against my partner in this unfortunate business."

Then Manette, not a whit discouraged, commenced to play her cards.

She said, softly:

"Father, if *you* were in prison on an unjust charge, you would like to be free until your trial so that you could prove your innocence, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly."

"Then give Frank Fearless the same chance that you would like to have."

"Manette, this is sentiment."

"It is justice."

"Justice must take its course."

Mr. Levere said this firmly, and turned as if to go away.

Manette stopped him quickly. She had one or two trump cards to play. She said, quietly:

"You are one of the leaders of the avengers of Riel, father?"

"I am."

"Suppose the plot is found out and you are arrested?"

"Well?"

"You would be thrown into prison?"

"Probably."

"You would want to get out?"

"Undoubtedly."

"So does Frank."

"I must go down-town, Manette."

Then the girl played her last card.

Stepping in front of him she said:

"Look at me, father."

"I am looking."

"What cause is dearest to you—nearest your heart?"

"The cause of the avengers."

"I have heard you say that the league wanted a frank, fearless man, brave as a lion and secret as the grave, who could be sent to the United States to raise men and money for the last grand *coup*."

"Yes."

"He should be an American."

"The Americans are busy people. They attend to business, to making money. Such a one as you describe would be hard to find."

"I have found one."

"You have?"

"I have."

"His name?"

"Frank Fearless."

"Ah!"

She continued passionately:

"He will be a perfect lion in our cause."

"Are you sure?"

"I know it."

To have the league of avengers succeed in the overthrow of the existing government was the wish dearest to his heart.

Mr. Levere was entirely sincere in his belief, and would go great lengths to accomplish his ends.

Without relating the particulars of the conversation between herself and lover on the preceding night, Manette convinced him that she was right.

After reflection he said:

"I'll go to the judge."

"And sign the bond?"

"Yes."

And he continued:

"But it is not to be made use of, or shown to Fearless, unless he absolutely promises to join our league and do what is required of him."

"I agree to that."

This time Manette did not attempt to stop her father as he went away. But within a minute or two she secretly followed him to the court, and was waiting for him when he came out.

He had in his hand the order granting Fearless his liberty until the trial.

Manette took it, saying:

"I'll take it to the prison."

"You?"

"Certainly, father."

He looked at her intently, saying:

"Manette, what is there between you and Fearless?"

She blushed and said:

"Only one thing."

"And that is——"

"Love."

"You love him?"

"I do."

"He is poor."

"That is no crime."

"And a criminal."

"Not yet."

"He will be when he is convicted."

"He will not be convicted."

Mr. Levere looked troubled. He had higher aims for his daughter than a marriage with Frank Fearless, even if his character had remained unclouded.

He saw the uselessness of objecting further, however, at present, and continued:

"Manette, I can trust you?"

"You can, father."

"You'll not marry him without my consent?"

"I will not; but I'll love him all the same."

The troubled look upon his face grew deeper.

But he said no more, and Manette hurried to the prison, was admitted, and ran into Frank's cell as already described.

Hunter said to himself, as she drew away from Frank when she perceived him:

"She's modest, too, as well as courageous. The tigress and dove combined."

Then he discreetly withdrew and left the lovers alone together.

Manette looked suspiciously after him. She said to Fearless:

"Frank, who is that man?"

"His name is Jackson."

"What's his business?"

"A detective."

"On your track?"

"To help me."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I am."

"I have a presentiment that he will do more harm than good to you."

"Mere fancy, Manette."

The girl said no more, although far from being satisfied. She proceeded to the business that brought her there, saying:

"I've come to set you free, Frank."

"Release me! Is the thief already found?"

"No; it is for your release on bail."

"Manette, you're an angel."

"Will you promise me something, Frank?"

"Anything—everything."

"Will you join the league?"

"I will."

Having said that—having given his promise, Frank Fearless would never break it. He would go on to the very end, no matter what the end might be.

He had been led into the toils by the very being who loved him best, and neither imagined what the end would be.

After awhile they came out of the cell together.

The countenance of Fearless was beaming.

Hunter, who was waiting in the corridor, said:

"The young lady has brought you good news, sir."

"How can you tell?"

"I see it by your face. Is it——"

"Private? No; here is the order for my release."

"I'm glad of it."

They were walking toward the warden's office, when a diminutive man ran up, crying out:

"Miss Manette, a word with you! I've very important information to communicate."

It was the little man, the dwarf.

"Hallo!" thought Hunter, "have they 'jugged' you already—or are you here on mischief bent? I'll keep an eye on you, my little chap, and watch."

CHAPTER VII.

It was indeed the dwarf, who, like the Old Man of the Sea, had so lately fastened himself on Hunter's back with a death-grip.

He gave a piercing glance at Hunter, but did not appear to recognize him in his present disguise.

Manette regarded him curiously and said:

"I don't know you."

"But I know you. Can I have a moment of your time?"

"For what?"

"Conversation."

"Speak on."

"No one else must hear."

"Are you a prisoner?"

"No."

"Then why are you here?"

"To see you."

The dwarf bent forward and whispered a word so low that no one else could hear.

Manette started.

Her face flushed as she said to Fearless:

"Wait a minute."

Manette walked a little apart from the detective and Frank Fearless.

The dwarf bent down and followed her obediently, like a dog.

When they were some distance away along the corridor, he whispered to her.

Hunter was observing everything.

He could not hear a word that was spoken, but learned something from their actions.

When the dwarf had ceased speaking to Manette, he left her, and passing the detective, left the jail.

Manette was pale.

Hunter observed that her voice trembled as she said:

"We will now go."

Fearless believed in Manette. He did not think of asking her about what she had spoken to the dwarf.

They went to the warden's room together and Frank was discharged.

Hunter had gone out before.

His object was not to follow the lovers, who would go to Manette's father's house.

In broad daylight he could not come near enough

to then to overhear their conversation without running the risk of disclosing his identity.

The first thing the detective did was to stop in the outer corridor and look anxiously up and down it.

No person was in sight. The dwarf had just been shown out, and the guard had retired to his customary alcove.

Hunter stopped a moment.

In a twinkling he removed his coat and turned it inside out, showing a suit of entirely different pattern and texture.

His hat was served the same way, and in addition he battered it in and put it with a jaunty curve on one side of the head.

He then donned a set of long, gray whiskers and mustache, and clapped upon his head a white wig, with the hair flowing around his ears in every conceivable position.

To effect this transformation had not taken him more than thirty seconds.

Putting on a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles, Hunter hurried to the door of the prison.

The guard stopped him, saying:

"Halt, old man!"

"Unlock the door."

"I think not. Nobody has come in who answers to your description. Come, get back there among your fellow-prisoners. You can't fool me."

There was no time to parley.

Hunter showed his badge, saying:

"Mum's the word."

The guard, at sight of the badge, became obsequious. He said humbly:

"I beg your pardon, sir."

Then he unlocked the outer door.

The detective stepped outside.

He had lost some precious seconds, and each second was of value.

Fortunately the dwarf, not dreaming of being followed, had not deemed it necessary to hasten.

He had not turned the corner when the detective emerged from the prison.

Crossing to the opposite side of the street, Hunter "shadowed" him.

The dwarf stopped at the next corner and stood leaning against a tree, whistling.

Hunter stepped into a doorway.

Hardly had he done so when Manette and Fearless came out of the jail.

They walked slowly in the direction of the place where Hunter was concealed.

When they were nearly opposite a man came hurriedly through a side street and confronted them.

The man was Ford, who had not yet heard of the release of Fearless, but was hastening to an appointment with the dwarf.

Ford stopped when he saw them.

His face became livid with rage.

There was a policeman on the other side of the street.

Ford beckoned to him, exclaiming:

"Here is an escaped prisoner! Arrest him!"

The policeman came across the street.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"This is the man who robbed the safe of Lawson & Co. He has escaped from jail. Arrest him!"

The policeman advanced.

"Hands off!" said Fearless.

"No violence, young fellow."

"Don't you use any. I'm out on bail."

"Who's your bondsman?"

"Mr. Levere."

Ford exclaimed:

"That's a lie."

Fearless exclaimed:

"Be careful; there's a gutter yonder."

Manette whispered:

"Don't mind him, Frank."

Ford continued:

"Levere wouldn't go on your bail-bond. He is the partner of Lawson, who was robbed."

The policeman said:

"I shall have to take you back to the jail and leave it to the authorities there."

Fearless was in no hurry.

"All right," he said.

He and Manette followed the policeman, thus retracing their steps.

Ford, chuckling at what he deemed his success in procuring the re-arrest of an escaped prisoner, went to the corner where the dwarf was standing, apparently unconcerned.

Hunter, knowing that Fearless would be released instantly upon his arrival at the prison, remained in the doorway, and did not attempt to follow.

Ford walked to the corner, and entered into a discussion with the dwarf.

The backs of both were toward the detective.

Hunter seized the opportunity to cautiously approach until he concealed himself in the doorway on the corner.

Here he could hear most of the conversation that passed between Ford and the dwarf.

Ford was saying:

"He is, then, really out on bail?"

"He is."

"Furies!"

But, becoming calmer, he continued:

"But he can't escape. The evidence is enough to convict him. It won't be many weeks before the trial, and then to prison he goes."

Hunter listened to hear if the dwarf would say anything about what had happened at the house that morning.

Nothing of the kind was mentioned, although it might have been before the detective came close enough to listen.

The dwarf said:

"There is one way you can be sure of the conviction of Fearless."

"How is that?"

"He will hire the best detective."

"And that is——"

"Hunter. You get ahead of the other side and hire Hunter to work against Fearless. These detectives always work on the side on which they get the most pay."

"What could Hunter do?"

"Weave such a web of evidence around Fearless that he can't escape."

"I'll think of it."

"You'd better do it."

The dwarf continued, impressively:

"Because if Hunter goes to work on the other side, things may be crooked."

"Hush! I think I'll do it."

Hunter chuckled, saying to himself:

"I hope you will; and if I don't 'wind you up' eventually, call me a monkey."

Ford then gave the dwarf some money, cautiously, and the two separated, going in different directions.

The detective sauntered along after Ford, who walked several blocks and entered a saloon.

The place was decent-looking.

Peering through the window, Hunter saw that no one but Ford and the man behind the bar were in the room.

Ford said something to the man, who went out of the room.

He presently appeared with a man of powerful physique, dressed in a flashy fashion.

Hunter recognized the man.

"H'm!" he said. "You're up to mischief, Mr. Ford; and I'm afraid the blow will be directed against the life of Fearless this time, instead of against his honor."

The pair retired to the corner furthest from the bar. With a bottle of wine and glasses before them, they talked earnestly and drank.

At the end of half an hour they had arrived at an understanding, for they shook hands, drank a parting glass, and Ford left the place.

The detective loitered near, watching for the other man.

He came out, somewhat the worse for his libations, and walked up the street.

Hunter "shadowed" him.

The man went to a tenement-house of respectable appearance, and entered.

At the same moment a man came out.

Hunter approached the latter, and said:

"Does the man who just entered live here?"

"Yes."

The detective asked no further questions.

He went home, disguised himself as one of the higher order of burglars, sat down and wrote a letter, addressed it, put it in his pocket, and returned to the house.

This time he rang the bell.

A neat-looking woman came to the door.

Hunter asked:

"Does Mr. John Crowley live here?"

"He does."

"I have a message for him."

"Do you wish to see him?"

"If you please."

The woman escorted him to the second floor back room, and said:

"He is there."

Hunter knocked on the door.

A deep voice said:

"Come in."

The detective opened the door and entered the room.

The man whom Ford had talked to and made a bargain with in the saloon was sitting on the side of the bed, upon which he had evidently been lying.

The man said gruffly:

"I guess you've made a mistake."

"I guess not."

"What do you want?"

"Is your name John Crowley?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE man sprung up, exclaiming:

"No!"

"Then that's all. Good-day."

"What do you want of Crowley?"

"That's nothing to you, if you ain't Crowley."

"Well, suppose I am?"

"Then I've got a letter for you."

"From where?"

"The United States."

"Let's have it."

"Are you Crowley?"

"Yes."

"I knew it all the time."

"How?"

"From Old Noll's description of you."

"Ha! You know Old Noll?"

"I should say so."

"Are you one of—"

"Read your letter. That'll tell you."

Crowley read the letter carefully, and said:

"You're Will Winter, eh?"

"Well, I am."

"And one of us?"

"You bet."

"Old Noll says that owing to a little unpleasantness you thought it best to board in Canada for awhile."

"That's about it."

"He wants you to train with me awhile."

"That's the size of it."

"Well, Old Noll's done me many a favor, and I don't like to refuse him."

"That's the talk."

"He says you never back out of any job if there's shiners enough in it."

"You can gamble on that."

Crowley went to a closet and produced a black bottle.

Putting glasses on the table, he said:

"Will Winter, let's smile."

"I'm agreeable."

Crowley was a heavy drinker when he had no business on hand.

He drank heavily this time, until he began to grow very loquacious.

This was the state to which Hunter was trying to bring him.

Suddenly Crowley said:

"Winter, what did you have to skip the States for?"

"A job I did for Old Noll."

"Much in it?"

"Twenty thousand."

"The deuce you say!"

"Yes."

"Did you ever do anything worse?"

"You mean what would make a man stretch hemp if he was caught?"

"Yes."

"Once."

"How did you feel after it?"

"Oh, all right."

"Didn't see any ghosts or the like of that, eh?"

"Pshaw, no!"

"I've heard of such things."

"Imagination."

"May be so. Say, Winter!"

"Well?"

"Have another drink."

Crowley's head was beginning to show a disposition to get down upon the table.

After another drink he commenced to hiccough.

"Winter!"

"Say on."

"I took a job to do to-night."

"Money in it?"

"Plenty."

"Couldn't let a chap in, could you?"

"Yes."

"Halves?"

"Certain."

"What's the penalty if we're nabbed?"

"Hangin'."

"Phew! Man or woman?"

"Man."

"Oh, that's nothing; I'll do the rough part; give us the points."

Crowley's head was already on the table.

He muttered something about to-morrow.

Hunter shook him and said:

"What's the name of the man that's to be 'fixed'?"

"Fr—a—a—"

There was no more to be got out of him.

He was sound asleep and snoring.

Hunter had learned enough to verify his suspicions.

He determined to come next day and obtain the particulars of the whole plot.

Leaving the place, he went to the police station and obtained a detail of twelve policemen in citizen's dress.

The hour the dwarf had said the meeting of the members of the league was to take place was nine o'clock.

At ten o'clock Hunter led his men to the place and stationed them.

Then he rang the bell.

True to his word, the dwarf was there.
 He opened the door and admitted Hunter and two of the policemen.
 Hunter whispered:
 "Are they here?"
 "Yes."
 The dwarf softly led the way up-stairs.
 He whispered:
 "Look through the keyhole."
 Hunter did so.

A limited view of the interior of the room was obtained.

He could see the forms of several men, but, owing to the thickness of the door, their conversation could not be heard.

Hunter turned the knob of the door.
 Contrary to his expectations it was unlocked.
 He pushed it open.

The full view of the room and its occupants was now obtained.

Thirty men were in the room, and also one woman.

The woman was Manette, who sat by the side of Frank Fearless.

The long table in the center of the room was covered with papers.

Ten men, chief of whom was Mr. Levere, were bending over the table examining the papers.

As the door opened Manette cried out.

Frank Fearless arose to his feet.

And all started back as the detective entered the room holding a pistol in each hand, and said:

"Surrender, gentlemen!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE occupants of the room seemed to be surprised rather than alarmed.

They stared at the intruder.

Mr. Levere was the first to speak, saying:

"You must leave this room."

"I think not."

"What do you want?"

"To have a look around."

"Well, you have looked. Now go."

"I am not ready."

Mr. Levere said sternly:

"You have no business here. If you don't go we'll all throw ourselves upon you. I'll not answer for the consequences to you."

"You forget these pistols."

Frank Fearless, brave as a lion, and not recognizing Hunter as the Jackson who had visited him in the jail, arose and came forward.

He placed himself in front of Hunter and said firmly:

"At most you can kill no more than a few of us before the others tear you in pieces. Now, leave! Or, first, try your hand on me."

Manette ran up. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement. She took her stand beside Frank, saying:

"And on me, if you are coward enough to harm a woman."

Hunter whistled. A second had hardly elapsed before the two policemen who had remained in the hall ran in.

They stationed themselves one on each side of the detective.

Manette cried out:

"A spy!"

Hunter rejoined, calmly:

"I wish to warn you, gentlemen, that there are several others outside who merely await my signal to rush upon you. You cannot escape, for the house is entirely surrounded. What say you?"

Mr. Levere replied:

"You must be a detective."

"You're right."

"Why do you come here?"

"To break up your league?"

"What league?"

"You are conspirators."

"Against whom?"

"The government."

Mr. Levere laughed in a tone that the detective did not like, as he replied:

"I wonder how you came to imagine that?"

"Isn't it so?"

"No."

"Why, then, are you all here?"

"That is our business."

One of the men present, whom the detective recognized as one of the principal merchants of the city, said quietly:

"Why don't you tell him, Levere?"

"I don't care to give him the satisfaction."

"No matter. He's a nuisance. Tell him what we're here for and get rid of him."

"Very well."

Mr. Levere took a document from the inside pocket of his coat, and unfolding it, said:

"Although you don't seem to be very intelligent, you have, no doubt, heard of the Hudson Bay Fur Company?"

"Certainly."

"This document is a charter similar to theirs. It grants to these gentlemen and myself, who have formed a company, the exclusive right to trap in the extreme Northwest. Now that Riel and his followers are dispersed, the leader dead, and the rest not likely to create further disturbance, the right is valuable. Do you follow me?"

"Certainly."

"We have met here to-night to discuss the particulars. Read the charter."

It was in the ordinary words of such documents.

The detective handed it back, saying:

"I have nothing to do with that."

"Nor with us any longer."

"That depends on circumstances."

"You're not satisfied with the explanation?"

"Hardly."

"What more do you want?"

"I'll have a look at those papers on the table."

"They are before you."

Hunter went to the table and looked at the papers.

They were, in truth, maps of different sections of the Northwest, most of them in pencil.

The detective felt that he was being baffled.

Were these men—who, he was still convinced, were laying plans to overthrow the government—protected in their secret meetings and plottings by the government itself?

The idea was startling.

Under this charter they could send their emissaries all over the Northwest without the least fear of molestation.

The conspiracy was deeper than he had thought.

Levere asked:

"Are you satisfied now?"

"Not yet."

"What more can you require?"

"I must search you."

"Never!"

Again the merchant who had once before interfered interposed, saying:

"Let him search."

And another said, in a sneering tone that belied the words:

"Although he is a detective, he *may not* be a thief."

Hunter looked at the speaker and thought:

"I owe you one for that. I'll not forget you."

He continued aloud:

"It is an unpleasant task, but it must be done."

"Go ahead."

No one offered the least resistance. Nothing of a compromising nature was found. Hunter was baffled. He had been betrayed, and he now believed he knew who had warned the avengers.

To arrest the men without proof would be folly. He resorted to duplicity, saying:
 "I am entirely satisfied, gentlemen."
 "You own you were mistaken?"
 "Certainly."

Manette now spoke, saying:
 "Then, perhaps you'll oblige us by going away."
 "With pleasure."
 The detective and officers left the room. Hunter felt chagrined over the result. He had been outwitted by the dwarf, who had undoubtedly told Manette the facts when they were in the jail.

The men had met there in accordance with their intention, but it was only to throw him off the track.

In that they had not succeeded, but he hoped they thought they had.

Going down-stairs he found the dwarf in the hall. The little man's face, the detective thought, bore an expression of satisfaction and a desire to laugh. Speaking low, Hunter said:

"Well, Mr. Dwarf, so you betrayed me, eh?"
 "Betrayed you? No. Ain't they all up-stairs?"
 "Yes."

"Then how did I betray you?"
 "Of course you didn't. I was joking."
 "Is everything straight up-stairs?"
 "Straight enough."

"I'm glad of it. If it hadn't been I'd have left, for I don't want the law to get hold of me again."

Hunter then left the house, and the dwarf smiled broadly as the door closed, and made a derisive gesture.

He did not know what a grim sleuth-hound the detective was, and that nothing short of death could make him abandon a scent when he had once taken it.

Half an hour later the conspirators, a few at a time, left the house.

Among the first to go were Mr. Levere, Fearless, and Manette.

Fearless had been initiated, the ceremony consisting of a solemn oath to support the league, obey its mandates, and never betray it.

When the three reached home they went into the library and sat down to talk over their affairs.

There was a listener to their conversation.

The folding-doors, which were slightly open, communicated with the sitting-room.

Ford, being an habitual caller, had been admitted by the servant, and was sitting in the room when the three entered.

The sitting-room was dark.

As the party entered, Ford was about to push open the folding-doors and join them, when he saw that Fearless was with them.

He drew back instantly, thinking:

"I'll see on what terms that chap stands with the old man now."

Mr. Levere said:

"Frank, you are now a member of the league,"
 "I am."

"There must be no retreat."

"There shall be none."

"The present government must be overthrown."

"You'll not find me backward."

"You remember it was said to-night that a messenger must be sent to Quebec."

"Yes."

"Will you go?"

"Certainly."

"It may be dangerous."

"Very well."

"You'll have to start to-morrow."

"I shall be ready."

He continued:

"What am I to do when I get there?"

"A man named Norton, whom you must go and see, will tell you. Trust him implicitly, and do as he says. I'll write a letter that you can take."

He wrote rapidly, handed the letter to Fearless, and said:

"Read it. It might be necessary for you to destroy it, in which case you could tell Norton what it contains."

Fearless read the letter and put it in his pocket.

Levere said:

"Do the contents dismay you?"

"Not at all."

"Good. You're brave, as all your nation are. Now we'll come to another subject—Manette."

"I love her."

"I know you do. I'll make a proposition."

"Go on."

"The success of your suit will depend on two things."

"Name them, sir."

"First, your faithfulness to the league."

"I will be true to death."

"Secondly, you must prove that you did not rob the safe. Of course Manette can't marry a convict."

"I know it, sir; and in case I am true to the league and prove my innocence—"

"Then Manette is yours."

When Ford heard that his face grew livid.

He stealthily left the house, muttering:

"What! Will he let her marry that beggar? By Heaven, we'll see! A secret league, eh? to destroy the government! Oh, ho, Mr. Levere, I've got a hold on you. A letter about the league is going to Quebec, and that young Yankee is going to carry it. Armed with that letter and Fearless out of the way, we'll see. Yes, Miss Manette, my Yankee-loving beauty, I think I have you and that old fool of a father of yours just about where I want you now."

CHAPTER X.

It was about noon next day when Hunter went to Crowley's room, disguised in the same way as when he called on him the day before.

Crowley, in deep thought, was sitting by the fire smoking a pipe.

He seemed pleased when the detective entered, and exclaimed:

"Glad to see you, Will Winter, blest if I ain't!"

"Thanks, old man."

Crowley took a few more whiffs and said:

"Old Noll says you're a regular out-and-outer."

"I guess so."

Again Crowley meditated, and then said:

"I think I can trust you."

"Don't have anything to do with me if you can't."

"Well, I will. You remember what I told you yesterday?"

"About the job?"

"You didn't tell me the name of the chap who is to go on the voyage."

"Will you help, if I divvy?"

"I told you I would."

"Well, then, his name's Frank Fearless."

"What's the other party's name?"

"The man who hired me?"

"Yes."

"Ford."

Again Crowley reflected, as if pondering what to say. After a minute he continued:

"Ford was here this morning, and he says the job's got to be commenced to-day."

"Commenced? How many days does it take to 'do' for one man?"

"Ford called about ten o'clock. He told me that Fearless was going to start for Quebec this afternoon."

"He will take a letter addressed to a man named Norton, in Quebec. I am to get possession of that letter before it reaches its destination. I'll get two hundred extra for the letter."

"We can work both jobs together," suggested Hunter.

"We'll have to follow him on the trip to Quebec," said Crowley.

"And trust to luck?"

"That's about it. Will you go along?"

"You can bet on it."

"It's like a wild-goose chase."

"We'll manage it. There's one thing that's got to be done, though."

"What's that?"

"Disguise ourselves so that Old Nick wouldn't know us after the job's over."

"I've got disguises enough."

"Where are they?"

"In my trunk. I'll show 'em to you."

The disguises were good enough.

The detective selected his, Crowley did the same, and after arranging their plans they went out and dined at a restaurant, where Hunter left Crowley alone for a few minutes.

Ten minutes before the train started they reached the depot.

Five minutes later Fearless appeared; he bought his ticket and entered a car.

The detective and Crowley followed.

Little was said about their plans for fear of being overheard by other passengers.

Suddenly, about two hours and a half after starting, there was a tremendous crash.

The car seemed about to roll over, but recovered its equilibrium.

People were pitched headlong from their seats and thrown one on top of the other.

Loud cries rang out.

Crowley, Hunter, and Fearless arose from among the debris and looked around.

There was, among the passengers, an indiscriminate rush toward the door.

The three, knowing that the danger was over, waited.

Soon the car was entirely deserted, with the exception of themselves.

Fearless was looking out of the window.

Crowley whispered:

"Now's our chance."

"Wait! it's too dangerous."

"I can break his skull in an instant with the butt of this pistol. They'll think it was done when the train ran off the track."

Hunter caught his arm and whispered:

"Hold on! There's a man looking in through the window."

"Where?"

"Over there. He's just left; but you can't tell how many are peering in."

"You're right. We'll wait."

Fearless turned and said quietly:

"The train is off the track."

"Evidently."

"I'll have a look around."

He left the car. The others followed; Hunter taking care not to let Crowley have a chance to strike a blow when no one was looking.

The engine lay across the track on its side.

The baggage and smoking cars were also overturned.

It would take hours to clear the track.

As if by a miracle no one had received serious injury, but all were thoroughly shaken up.

The conductor approaching, Hunter said:

"How long will we remain here?"

"Two hours, if not more."

"And there's no way of going on?"

"None. Another train will be sent from Montreal, but it can't pass until the track's clear."

Fearless said:

"I think I'll take a stroll."

Crowley nudged Hunter and whispered:

"Do you hear? Now's our chance."

"Yes."

"Let's follow."

"We'd better not both go."

"Why not?"

"One man ain't so likely to be caught dogging another as two."

"Which of us will go, then?"

"I ain't much of a hand at 'shadowing.'"

"I am."

"You'd better go, then."

This was exactly what the detective wished. It was his policy to learn the contents of the letter Fearless carried, and to make Crowley believe he had killed him.

By this time it had become dark, and the air was cold. Most of the passengers had again gone inside the cars.

Crowley whispered:

"How are you going to 'fix' him?"

"I don't know. I'll see."

"Now's your time, or never."

"I know it. You'd better go inside."

By this time Fearless was vanishing in the darkness.

Hunter followed, keeping so far behind that he was just able to see the other.

Fearless shivered. He had begun to realize that it was very cold; he quickened his steps for exercise.

Suddenly a light appeared. A small cabin stood in the center of a little clearing twenty yards from the road.

Having nothing better to do, Fearless went to the door and knocked.

The man who opened the door was evidently a white man, but his face was so begrimed with coal-dust that he closely resembled a colored man.

But every feature of his rugged face shone with good nature, and it was plain to be seen that he was an honest man.

He exclaimed in surprise:

"Hallo, stranger!"

He continued heartily:

"Come in, come in! Don't be standing there in the cold. Don't be afraid of me. I ain't half so black as I look. Bless you, it's the charcoal."

Fearless walked in, saying:

"I guess you're a charcoal-burner."

"I should say so. I'm all alone to-night, too, and glad of company. My partner's gone to town for grub, and won't be back till late."

He pulled a stool in front of the fire and continued:

"Sit down and warm yourself. Mighty cold night."

He piled pine knots in the fireplace, and the flames roared up the chimney.

Then he filled his pipe, and sitting down, said:

"Ain't you a little off the track, stranger?"

"No, but the train is."

"What train?"

"The express from Montreal. There's been a smash-up. The wreck won't be cleared in some hours."

"Thunder! we don't have much excitement around here. I guess I'll go to see it. You stay here, sir, and rest yourself."

Frank, under the influence of the blazing fire, began to feel very drowsy. He replied:

"I'm afraid I'll go to sleep."

"Go ahead. I'll come back and wake you before they get things fixed."

Fearless, feeling stiff and sore from the effects of his bruises, was glad enough to sit still.

The charcoal-burner went away.

Fight as he would against it, drowsiness overcame Fearless. At last he gave up, saying:

"I'll have a little nap. Just a few winks."

He rested his head against the wall, and in a moment was sleeping soundly.

Hunter had been peering in through the single pane of glass that served for a back window.

"Asleep," he said. "I wonder if I could get the letter."

The risk of detection was great, and he hesitated. But the letter must be of great importance, or Fearless would not have been sent to Quebec with it.

Hunter determined to risk it.

Going around the cabin he unlatched the door and stepped inside.

Fearless was sleeping soundly, as his deep, regular breathing attested.

The detective approached him softly.

Owing to the heat of the pine-knot fire, he had thrown open his coat.

The letter would most likely be in the inside breast pocket of his coat.

Hunter softly put his fingers in the pocket. He felt a long pocket-book.

Removing the pocket-book with a touch that would not have wakened the lightest sleeper, the detective opened it.

There was an unsealed letter directed to Norton, of Quebec.

Going to the fire, Hunter read the letter.

An exclamation escaped him.

"Ah!" he said.

The letter was of so much importance that he took out his pencil and note-book and copied every word of it.

Then he returned it to the pocket-book, which he deposited in the sleeper's pocket.

This done, he went out of the cabin, closing the door softly behind him, and leaving Frank Fearless sleeping peacefully.

CHAPTER XI.

HUNTER now had to get rid of Crowley.

If he saw Fearless return, half the game would be spoiled.

It was his plan to make Ford believe that Fearless was dead. Ford, in that case, would be more than apt to show the full strength of his hand immediately than if he supposed Fearless was alive.

Just as he reached the track a train going toward Montreal came up on the other track, and stopped at the scene of the wreck.

The detective thought:

"Here is a Godsend; if Crowley will only see it."

He entered the car and beckoned Crowley to go outside. When on the platform, Crowley whispered:

"Have you fixed him?"

"Yes. Don't speak so loud."

"How did you do it?"

"Choked him to death."

"Good. Where's the letter?"

It will be remembered that when Crowley and the detective were at dinner, Hunter went out for a short time.

He then wrote a letter.

This letter he had addressed to Norton, of Quebec, because Ford had told Crowley it was to be the superscription on the genuine letter, that he might make no mistake.

He signed Levere's name to the letter, rightly supposing that the genuine one was from him.

This letter he now handed to Crowley, saying:

"There it is."

Crowley took it with every appearance of satisfaction.

His mission had been done without risk to himself, and he was sure of the reward.

He looked at Hunter admiringly, thinking:

"What a nerve that fellow has. He don't seem to mind choking a man to death any more than wringing a chicken's neck."

Hunter was afraid the other train would start without having Crowley aboard, or that Fearless would return and spoil his plot.

As if the idea had suddenly occurred to him, he said:

"Crowley, there's no use of your going on to Quebec. You have the letter and Hunter's fixed."

"Right you are. Let's get on."

Hunter appeared to hesitate.

At last he said:

"I guess I'll go on to Quebec."

"What for?"

"Well, I wouldn't mind seeing the city."

"No more would I. We'll both go."

"If I was you I wouldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because you had better strike Ford for that money while he's in the humor. The old fool may repent."

This startled Crowley, who said:

"You're right. I'll go back and pocket the dollars to-morrow morning. Your share will be all right."

"Oh, that's all right."

"When'll I see you?"

"In a day or two."

The conductor of the other train called out:

"All aboard!"

Crowley ran across to the other track, and got on the other train as it was moving off.

The detective smiled grimly, saying:

"Eureka!"

Then he stood on the platform of the wrecked train and waited for Frank Fearless.

The young American came in about an hour, looking as if his sleep had done him good.

He entered the car which he had left, and sat down in the same seat.

Some time afterward the track was cleared, an engine from Montreal was fastened to the rear end of the cars which had not been thrown off the track, and the cars were pushed by it toward Quebec.

At the first switch they reached the engine again assumed its proper position, and they dashed forward at lightning speed.

Up to this time Fearless had remained silent, thinking of Manette and of his mission for the league, but now he turned to Hunter and said:

"That was quite a smash-up we had."

"It was."

"Lucky no one was killed."

"Yes, indeed."

The detective exerted himself to be agreeable.

He succeeded so well, that when the tedious journey to Quebec was at last accomplished, Fearless handed him his card.

Hunter had not, of course, a card with him bearing the new name which he intended to give Fearless.

He gave his name as Dawson.

Fearless, who seemed to like his new companion, asked:

"At what hotel do you intend to stop?"

Fearless gave the name of the hotel which had been recommended to him by Mr. Levere, and said:

"I shall stop there."

"So shall I, then."

"When do you return to Montreal?"

"Within a day or two."

"And I also."

They were out on the platform, and both were driven to the hotel mentioned by Fearless.

Fearless went to breakfast.

Hunter had no idea of doing that, although he needed it.

The instant the young American went to the breakfast-room, Hunter went into the street.

The streets of Quebec were as familiar to him as those of Montreal.

He went straight to a costumer's whom he knew, and said:

"I want a new disguise."

The costumer knew his profession, and he had innumerable rigs to choose from.

He speedily disguised himself from head to foot.

Then he returned to the hotel, and, sitting down in the lobby, waited for the appearance of Fearless.

The young man came in a few minutes.

He went to the desk and said to the clerk:

"Where is the man who came in with me?"

"He went out, sir."

"Without breakfast?"

"Yes, sir."

"From his dress I don't think he is any too well fixed in this world's goods. If he wants anything, let him have it on my account."

"All right, sir."

Hunter smiled, and said to himself:

"I'll not forget that, Frank Fearless."

Fearless left the hotel.

Hunter followed.

The young American walked a few blocks and rang the bell of a neat house.

Hunter was not far behind him.

Ever on the scent, he followed the trail like a sleuth-hound.

Fearless was admitted by a pretty servant-maid, who told him her master was in.

When the door closed Hunter read the name on the door-plate.

It was "Benjamin Norton."

Hunter already had the last name in his notebook.

He now entered the first.

Fearless was well received by Norton, who was a stationer.

He read the letter, and then said:

"Come with me."

He led the way into a small private room, and said:

"Here is where I keep all documents connected wit the league."

He continued:

"But our friends of the league need have no fear. No living person except myself can find them."

"And you are——"

"The secretary of the league. If it is discovered, to a certainty it will be through my carelessness, or—betrayal."

"You have no cause to fear the latter?"

"Not from you. Come to-night, and I'll show you the papers and tell you what you have to do. Do you ever flinch at danger?"

"Rarely."

"You may have to go through more within the next few nights than you dream of."

"I am ready."

"I don't doubt it. Come to-night."

The stationer was not ready yet to tell all he knew.

Fearless returned to the hotel.

That night at the appointed hour he returned.

The stationer took him to the same small room, and said:

"You have time now to 'back out' if you wish."

"I do not wish."

"Very well, then. It will soon be too late."

The stationer arose.

It was some time after this that the detective reached the house.

All was dark and gloomy.

Not a light showed.

Hunter stopped in front of the house.

He said to himself:

"It's dangerous, but must be done. What I want and what will settle this whole affair, is in that house."

He had resolved upon a bold game.

He had determined to enter and search the house of as shrewd a man as lived.

He walked softly up the steps to the front door and listened.

There was no sound in the house.

Hunter said to himself:

"I don't like it."

But at the same time, as duty obliged, he did it.

He opened the door with a skeleton-key and entered the house.

The hall was dark.

He listened again. All was quiet.

He took a step forward, and then the surprise came.

Something seized him.

It was not human, for it had not a human touch.

It held him fast as the grave would hold him.

Struggle as he would, he could not break the grip.

He heard the faint tinkling of a bell.

A moment later an invisible hand touched him, and a deep voice laughingly exclaimed:

"Ha! ha! Another one!"

CHAPTER XII.

HUNTER, in the dark hallway, felt the iron hands encompass him.

He struggled hard, but they seemed to hold him all the tighter.

Realizing that he was expending his strength uselessly, he desisted and remained still.

For a moment nothing happened. Then a bright light flashed across the hall.

It was a light cast by a reflector, and fell upon the detective and a circle of a radius of one or two feet on each side of him.

All else in the hall still remained dark.

Hunter waited and listened, saying nothing.

It was hardly a minute after this when the stationer came out of the darkness into the circle of light.

He regarded the detective intently a moment, his pale, refined face looking ghastly in the glare of the reflected light.

He then said:

"You are caught."

"Undoubtedly."

"And you cannot get away."

"That is so."

The stationer looked at him curiously, saying:

"What shall I do with you?"

"That is for you to say."

"I shall have to turn you over to the police."

That was exactly what the detective wished, and he said:

"I can't help it."

The stationer smiled, saying:

"Do you think I am such a fool as that?"

"I hope not."

"Then you don't want to go there?"

"I should say not."

"Well, you won't have to—just now!"

He moved to the wall, adding:

"I think I will take you out of this thief-trap, and remove you to other quarters."

He touched a spring in the wall.

The detective thought he would then be released, and had no fear of a personal encounter between himself and the stationer.

He was deceived, however, for there was more in the apparatus that confined him than he imagined.

He was, indeed, released from the wall, but his arms were still held tightly to his sides by the iron bands.

The stationer then said:

"March!"

"Where?"

"Up-stairs."

The detective had no alternative.

Chagrined, and his blood boiling, he walked upstairs in front of the stationer, who, when they reached the landing, said:

"On with you up the next flight to the third floor!"

When they were on the third floor the stationer passed him and opened a door.

Then turning to Hunter, he said:

"Go in there."

The apartment into which he was ushered was a small room in the center of the house.

It had no windows, and was lighted by a skylight in the roof.

A small bedstead and a chair were in the room.

The stationer said:

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"I don't like it."

"You would prefer the police-station?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll keep you here awhile. Sit down and rest easy a minute."

The stationer left the room, returning in a minute or two with Frank Fearless.

He had a reason for this.

He suspected that Hunter was not a burglar, and might be a spy.

It was not his intention to kill the detective, for he was not a murderer in cold blood.

If he satisfied himself that Hunter was a burglar, he would take him to the police-station in the morning.

If he became convinced that he was a spy, he would confine him until the secret league had accomplished its purpose.

But the stationer well knew that the best laid plans of men often fail, and it was possible Hunter might escape, although such an event was not by any means probable.

He meant, however, to be prepared for everything.

Frank Fearless was connected with the central league of Montreal, of which the Quebec agency was only a branch.

In case of detection, the central league would move heaven and earth to save Fearless.

He meant, therefore, that Fearless should be involved in this unlooked-for combination with him, so that in case of detection the stationer would have a better chance.

He also wished to know whether the young American would recognize Hunter.

Hunter was sitting on the bed when they entered.

He arose and said:

"I don't like these iron bands around me."

The stationer smiled grimly, saying:

"Well, you'll have to endure 'em."

Then turning to Fearless, he continued:

"Do you know that man?"

The detective had, as the reader knows, already spoken to Fearless in the jail; but he was now disguised so differently that the American had not the slightest idea as to his identity.

He replied:

"No."

"Have you never seen him before?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"H'm," said Hunter to himself. "My disguise must be very nearly perfect to deceive that young American with his sharp eyes."

The stationer continued to Hunter:

"What's your name?"

"Haven't any."

The detective wished to make it appear by his answers that he was a veritable burglar.

He therefore answered gruffly, and in a surly, sullen tone.

The stationer, sharp as a steel-trap, was not to be deceived.

He said:

"What were you doing in my hall?"

"Well, I'm in for it, and might as well tell."

"You're right."

"I got into the wrong house."

"Nonsense."

"Well, I'm on the overcoat racket."

"Trying to steal overcoats here, eh?"

"I didn't say so."

"I don't believe a word you say."

"Don't you, mister?"

"Not by a long chalk."

"Then I'm an honest man."

"Not much; you're an infernal spy."

"A spy?"

"That's what I said."

Hunter laughed.

"Ha! ha! I wonder who I'm a spy for? I wish I was, though, and I wouldn't have such a hard time to make a living."

"It won't do."

"What won't do?"

"Giving us taffy."

And the stationer, after a moment, continued:

"We'll leave you locked up here and starve you into a confession, and if you don't confess before you're starved to death, why, then you'll have to die."

CHAPTER XIII.

HUNTER pretended to be terribly frightened, as, indeed, he was somewhat alarmed at the prospect.

He trusted, however, to his customary luck and skill.

He exclaimed, however, in a whining, cringing voice, the better to deceive the stationer:

"You're hard on me. Why don't you take me to the station-house? I told you the truth—I was after overcoats; I can't confess any more."

The stationer replied:

"We'll see."

And turning to Fearless, he continued:

"Come, my young friend."

They went out of the room.

The stationer locked and bolted the door, saying:

"He'll stay there safe enough."

"How long do you intend to keep him there?" asked Frank.

"Until he confesses."

"You surely don't intend to starve him?"

"We'll see about that."

"What do you think he is?"

"A spy—a detective."

"And on our track?"

"Yes."

Fearless looked anxious, but said no more.

He realized that difficulties were thickening around him.

In addition to the charge against him of robbing the safe, there was now the danger of his being arrested as a conspirator against the government.

In that case the government charge would infallibly weigh against him when he was tried for the robbery, and *vice versa*.

But the young American had given his word and would not back down.

Manette was his goal.

He was working to win her.

Through fire and into the valley of death would he go for that reward.

The stationer took him down into the library, saying:

"You are not discouraged?"

"No."

"Sit down then, and I will show you a complete list of the members in this province, and tell you what the central league has marked out for you to do."

Hunter, being left alone, sat down on the side of the low bed, and commenced to study out a plan of escape.

He had no great fear of his life, at present, but escape without delay was imperative if he would succeed in breaking up the nest of conspirators against the existing government of Canada.

He arose and tried the door, throwing his whole weight against it.

It was of thick, heavy oak, and did not budge.

Satisfied of the futility of this, he looked up at the skylight, through which the rays of the newly risen moon were shining.

If he could reach that and open it, he might make his escape across the roofs of the houses.

But his arms were confined. There was the trouble.

How could he get the terrible iron band off?

At last he thought of a plan which promised a possible chance of success.

The chair was standing by the bed, and it was about the height of the iron bedstead.

Down on his knees he got, and, resting one side of the iron on the edge of the bedstead and the other on the edge of the chair, tried to work the band upward, and at last succeeded.

Little by little the band slipped up, like the iron hoop on a cask, and when it was over his shoulders the job was done.

He arose and stretched himself.

Then he looked at the skylight.

It was above his reach.

He drew the bed beneath it and put the chair upon the bed.

Standing upon the chair he could reach the skylight.

It was held by hooks, which he unfastened, and, drawing himself up by the arms, climbed out upon the roof.

From house to house he went, but the skylights were all fastened.

At last he came to a house of two stories and let himself down upon it.

There was a skylight in the center.

It was unfastened.

Lifting it, Hunter went down a ladder to the floor.

The apartment in which he now stood was not more than five feet square.

In fact, it was no more than a closet, used for the sole purpose of containing and keeping out of sight the ladder which led out upon the roof.

A door opened to the right. It was not locked. Hunter opened it and stepped into a room.

The apartment was elegantly furnished, and heated by a grate fire.

In the bed, in an alcove, lay a woman, apparently sleeping.

She was young and beautiful, and as the light of the fire fell upon her, Hunter thought he had never seen such a wealth of dark-brown hair.

She stirred, and murmured:

"The league, the league, the secret league! Destruction to the existing government."

Then she continued:

"Thank God that Lola's house is the headquarters of the revolutionists in Quebec."

To gain the door Hunter had to pass the bed.

A loose board creaked.

In an instant the girl sat up.

She snatched a pistol from underneath her pillow.

She pointed it at Hunter, who stood clearly revealed by the light of the fire.

And as her splendid hair fell over her beautiful, rounded shoulders, she cried out, in a musical voice:

"Death to the craven who enters Lola's room!"

* * * * *

The miser waited anxiously for the emissary whom, as we have seen, he sent on the track of Frank Fearless, to obtain the letter and to do away with the young American.

The reader is aware that the detective frustrated this well-laid plan, but led the would-be murderer to suppose that the evil deed was accomplished at the wood-chopper's cabin in the woods.

And he also, it will be remembered, substituted a fictitious letter for the one that Mr. Levere had intrusted to Fearless for delivery to the stationer in Quebec.

The morning after the rascal returned to Montreal he called on the miser.

"It's all right," he said.

"Is he—"

"Dead as a door-nail."

"And the letter?"

"Here it is."

The miser opened and read it.

An expression of triumph passed over his face as he thought:

"Now I have old Levere and that spitfire daughter of his where I want 'em."

He continued, aloud:

"You can go."

"Guess not."

"What are you waiting for?"

"The dust."

"The what?"

"Money."

"Oh, that'll be all right."

"I want the cash."

"Won't to-morrow do?"

"No, sir! Pay cash right away. If you don't—"

He made a significant motion.

The miser groaned. To part with the money was like death to a man of his grasping disposition.

He unlocked a small safe in his room, counted the money and gave it, receiving in reply the growled out words:

"All right, guv'nor. I'm always on hand for gents that pay. Good-day."

Being left alone, the miser sat awhile in earnest thought.

Then he left the house, saying:

"I may as well strike while the iron is hot."

He walked straight to the house of Mr. Levere.

Manette, looking pale and troubled, was in the library with her father.

She had been thinking of Frank and the mission on which he had been sent.

The girl dearly loved the young American, and almost regretted that she had endangered his safety by inducing him to join the secret league of Riel's avengers.

The miser came in jauntily.

Feeling sure that he had Mr. Levere in the toils, he said brusquely:

"A word with you, Levere."

"I am listening."

"In private."

"I have no secrets from Manette."

The miser reflected.

"H'm!" he said to himself. "Perhaps it's as well that the girl should be present."

He continued:

"Levere, I have obtained surprising information concerning you."

"What is it?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No."

"It's about the government."

Mr. Levere started.

The miser perceived it and smiled.

He continued:

"A conspiracy."

"What conspiracy?"

"To overthrow the government; and, Mr. Levere, you are the head and front of it."

"I?"

"Yes, you; and that young American rogue, Frank Fearless, whose bail you went to get him out of jail, is also in it."

Up to this time Manette had remained silent.

Now she spoke up in defense of her absent lover:

She cried out loudly:

"It's you who are the rascal!"

The miser smiled.

"Defend the Yankee scullion," he said.

Manette threw open the door.

She was like a young tigress.

She cried out:

"Go!"

Her father said quietly:

"Wait!"

Manette stood by the door, holding it open.

Mr. Levere continued:

"Your proofs, sir?"

"I have them."

"Produce them."

"In your library you made arrangements with young Fearless to go to Quebec on secret business."

"How do you know that?"

"I know everything. I can tell you every word of the conversation that passed between you, Manette and the young Yankee."

He did repeat much of it.

Mr. Levere saw that in some inexplicable way he had obtained much correct information, and that if he made use of it at the present juncture, it would ruin him, Fearless and Manette, and work destruction to the league.

He said at last:

"I deny all that you say."

The miser smiled, saying:

"How will written proof do?"

"Have you that?"

"Yes."

"Let me see it."

"We'll make terms—give me Manette."

"She is engaged."

"Yes, I know; to that young Yankee. Well, he'll never marry anybody."

The instant the miser said this he regretted it, fearing that when it was known Frank was dead, suspicion would be directed against himself.

For the old man to propose to her seemed to Manette ridiculous.

She laughed aloud, saying:

"I must decline, sir."

"Even if I can ruin your father?"

"How can such a thing as you ruin anybody? Who will believe you?"

The miser exploded with rage.

"Can't I?" he exclaimed, loudly. "If I can't then this paper can. It's the very letter your father told Fearless to take to Quebec."

He produced the letter.

Manette's father turned pale.

He started forward, crying out:

"Give it to me."

Manette murmured:

"Frank is lost! He would only surrender that paper with his life."

The miser had come prepared.

He drew a pistol, saying:

"No violence. Would you like to read the letter?"

"Yes."

Holding his pistol in one hand, the miser held the letter before the eyes of the old man with the other.

An expression of relief appeared on the face of Manette's father as he read.

The reader will recognize the letter as the one that Hunter had "fixed."

He said:

"I never wrote that letter."

"Pshaw! You can't deceive me."

At that instant Manette sprung forward like a tigress.

She snatched the letter and confronted him, exclaiming:

"Take it from me if you dare!"

"It's mine. Give it to me."

"According to your own statement it belongs to Frank Fearless. Now go!"

She had her hand on the bell-cord as she continued:

"In ten seconds I'll ring for the servants and have you thrown from the door like a dog!"

The miser hesitated.

He turned to Manette's father and said furiously:

"Your answer?"

"I must have time to consider."

"How long?"

"A week."

"I'll give you three days. And, mind you, if the answer isn't favorable, you and Fearless shall go to the dogs together."

He then left the house.

Manette and her father talked the matter over awhile, without devising any plan to avert the new danger.

When they separated, Manette went to her room and thought.

At night she went to an adjoining room.

This room had been occupied by a younger brother, who was dead.

His clothing was still there.

She selected a suit and took it to her room.

Then she sat down, wrote a letter, and, having sealed it, directed it to her father.

She called her maid and said:

"Annette, I am going out. Give this letter to father at ten o'clock."

Being alone again, she said:

"They have either killed or will kill Frank. He must be warned and guarded."

Then she donned the suit of clothes, tied her hair up tightly in a knot and secreted it beneath her slouch hat.

Then, carrying a small hand sachel, she walked to the depot, bought a ticket for Quebec and entered the train, saying, as it whirled away:

"Who has a better right to save him than myself—the girl he loves?"

CHAPTER XIV.

LOLA was beautiful.

Sitting up in her nightdress she looked like an angelic being endowed with bravery.

Hunter was in a "fix."

He was not armed, and had he been, he would as soon have lost his life under the impulse of the moment, as harm a creature so beautiful as this.

The girl said:

"Before I kill you, explain."

The words that the girl had spoken occurred to the detective:

"Lola's house is the headquarters of the revolutionists in Quebec."

He said instantly:

"I am a patriot."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"How did you reach my room?"

"I came down through the skylight."

"For what reason?"

"To escape from my enemies."

"And they are——"

"The British Government."

The beautiful girl hesitated. She lowered the pistol.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"A member of the league."

"What proof have you?"

"The proof that I have been chased by the British soldiers."

"Let me know something about it."

Hunter concocted a story which had an air of probability about it.

He made it as thrilling as he could, and the girl said, drawing a long breath:

"You have done well."

"I hope I may come to know you better."

"You will in time."

The detective said at a venture:

"Your house is the headquarters of the league in Quebec. Are you not afraid?"

"No. Hunter can't detect us."

"Hunter?"

"Yes. He is the detective who is working on this case. I received a telegram from Montreal."

Hunter said to himself:

"Good! We'll see, my lady."

He continued:

"Have I your permission to retire?"

"Certainly. But you must call again."

"For whom shall I ask?"

"Lola."

"Good-night, Lola."

"Good-night, my patriot."

Hunter went down-stairs and out at the hall door. A youth was sauntering past on the sidewalk. It seemed to Hunter that he had seen the boy before somewhere.

He said to himself:

"I'll follow you, my joker."

The youth went on, and Hunter "shadowed" him.

We left Frank Fearless and the stationer in the library of the latter.

The stationer went to a secret receptacle and took therefrom a roll of parchment.

The parchment contained the names of all the Quebec members of the secret league.

Frank noticed among them many people whom he knew in Montreal.

He said to the stationer:

"Very well. That is all good enough, so far as it goes. But why have I been sent to Quebec?"

"Don't you know?"

"I do not."

"I will tell you."

"Do so."

The stationer went on to say that a quantity of arms and ammunition had been stored not far from Quebec, for the use of the patriots.

But these munitions were in different localities, and they must be got together to a common center, either in Quebec or on the outskirts.

Fearless had been selected for this job, because he would not be known to the spies of the Canadian Government in Quebec.

He could pass as an American traveling for pleasure, and thus he could do much that the natives of the province could not do."

He was, furthermore, to secretly encourage the

desire for rebellion and obtain all the recruits he could, in a quiet manner.

The stationer concluded in these words:

"But you must not start out into the provinces until the day after to-morrow, and to-morrow night you must go to see Lola."

"Lola!"

"Yes, who knows more about our plans than any woman living, except Manette."

"Ha! you know Manette?"

"Certainly. Every leader of the secret league knows Manette, and knows her well."

"How can I see Lola?"

"I'll take you there, to-morrow night."

The stationer continued:

"You had better stay here with me, and not go to a hotel. Now we'll go up-stairs and see how our prisoner is getting on. He'll soon be willing to confess, I'll warrant."

They went up-stairs into the room in which Hunter had been confined, and unlocked the door. The room, as we know, was empty.

The stationer turned pale.

He said:

"The man has escaped."

And, after a moment, he continued:

"He was certainly a detective. I suspected it, and now I know it."

The stationer was troubled. He did not say much, but led the way down-stairs.

When there, he said to Fearless:

"We are environed with difficulties. It is to be a much harder struggle than I thought. Let us sleep, and to-morrow we will awake with clearer heads."

The next day was passed quietly in the stationer's house.

After supper the stationer said:

"We'll go to Lola's."

"Who is she?"

"The head of the female portion of the league in Quebec."

"Come, then."

They went to Lola's house, and were admitted.

Lola, in full-dress, was queenly.

The young American admired her.

Lola treated him graciously because she knew from the stationer that he was doing the most dangerous work of the league.

In the room were two new members.

One was a youth with a wealth of dark brown hair.

He regarded the movements of Lola and the young American curiously.

He seemed nervous and excited.

The other was tall and dark.

He said to himself:

"If Fearless isn't falling in love with Lola my name is not Hunter."

Lola was reclining on a sofa.

Frank Fearless was bending over her.

She whispered to him.

Fearless said aloud:

"Ladies and gentlemen, to order. The secret league is now in session."

The youth turned pale.

He seemed to lose command of himself.

He cried out loudly:

"Death to a recreant lover. No! but death to the woman who stole his love from me."

A pistol flashed.

Then Hunter caught her arm and said:

"Manette, hold your fire!"

CHAPTER XV.

MANETTE's arm dropped.

She turned and looked at Hunter. Every eye in the room was directed toward her.

Lola started from the sofa.

She ran up to Manette and said instantly:

"You are young to be a member of this league."

Hunter whispered to Manette:

"Keep cool."

The words, spoken in a quiet, gentle tone, calmed Manette.

In an instant she was herself again.

She turned to Lola, saying:

"You, too, are young."

"But I am a woman."

"And I——"

Lola looked intently at Manette. Then a look of quick intelligence flashed into her eyes.

She whispered gently:

"Why did you wish to shoot me?"

"I was mad—crazy."

"I know what the trouble is."

"What is it?"

"Jealousy."

A flush suffused the face of Manette.

Lola continued:

"Can you trust me enough to come with me alone a little while?"

Manette nodded her head.

Lola led her into an inner room and poured out a glass of wine, saying:

"Drink that, and you will soon be better."

And she continued:

"You are a woman?"

"I am."

"Will you tell me your business here?"

"It is the same as yours."

"Are you a member of the league?"

"Yes."

"Your name?"

"Manette."

"Of Montreal?"

"Yes."

Lola sprung to her feet.

"The head of the secret branch of the female leaguers of Montreal!" she cried. "And you wished to harm me, the head of the female league of Quebec?"

Manette looked down abashed.

The spirit of the half-breed girl was quickly roused, but she was as quick to see her error.

She cried out, instantly:

"Forgive me."

Lola smiled, saying:

"It is of the past."

And she continued:

"If I ever love and marry it will be a man like the one who caught your arm."

"Who is he?"

"A gentleman from the upper provinces. He comes highly recommended."

Hunter had, indeed, come highly recommended, if we judge from the letters of introduction which he presented to Lola.

These letters were, of course, forgeries, but that would not be found out for some days.

Lola and Manette returned to the parlor.

Although most of those present had seen her actions with the pistol and heard her words, none, with the exception of Lola and Hunter, suspected that she was a woman.

When they saw Lola and Manette enter the room together on the best of terms, they were inclined to think the incident was a hoax, invented for their diversion.

As they entered the room Manette said:

"Tell no one the secret of my sex."

"Not even Frank?"

"No."

The stationer came up, saying:

"That little scene of yours was very dramatically arranged, and acted to the life."

Lola smiled, saying:

"Is there anything new?"

"There is."

The stationer proceeded to relate the escape of the detective.

Lola saw in an instant that she had been deceived.

She told the stationer what had happened.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed. "That's bad."

"We must make the best of it."

"Who is the stranger who caught the lad's arm?"

"A patriot from the Northwest. He comes very highly recommended."

"He seems shrewd."

"He is."

"If we have a detective on our track we ought to put a detective on him."

"Whom can we trust?"

"That stranger."

Lola beckoned to Hunter, who had been watching the party, although not seeming to see them.

The stationer, entirely deceived by the letters of introduction the detective carried, told him what had occurred.

"Describe the man," said Hunter.

When the description was furnished, he exclaimed:

"You are right. The man is a detective. His name is Hunter."

The stationer, having heard of the great renown of the detective, was frightened.

He asked, in an unsteady tone:

"What can be done?"

"Put me on his track."

"You?"

"Certainly. If he plots I'll counterplot. If he 'shadows,' I'll 'shadow' him. Wherever Hunter goes, there will I be. I'll stick to him closer than a leech. I'll be nearer to him than his own shadow. Every word of his I'll hear, every action of his I'll make a note of."

"Can you do all this?"

"Try me."

"We will."

The stationer continued:

"To shadow Hunter, the sleuth-hound, shall be your part of the work of the league."

Hunter was, then, set to hunt himself.

He felt that if he accomplished nothing more just then, he had done a good night's work.

That the league would employ a detective to "shadow" Hunter, after what had occurred at the stationer's and Lola's the night before, was evident.

He had secured the job himself, and for the present, then, could pursue his hunt unwatched.

At proper intervals it would be easy to concoct a deceptive report.

Manette approached Hunter and said:

"You know me."

"How do you know?"

"You called my name."

"Well, yes."

"You'll not expose me?"

"No, but I'd like to give you a little advice."

"What is it?"

"Go home."

"Not now."

"Why not?"

"Because I am here on business."

The detective believed he knew what the business of Manette was, but said nothing.

Manette avoided Fearless for the remainder of the evening. She was afraid he might possibly recognize her, and kept away from him.

The next day the young American started on his mission.

What that mission was the detective did not exactly know.

He determined, however, to find out, and laid his plans accordingly.

Manette also laid her plans.

The first thing she did in the morning was to go to a private hairdresser.

Before going there she again assumed the dress of a woman, and said to the hairdresser:

"Cut my hair off."

"Miss, that would be a pity."

"To wear the hair short is becoming fashionable."

"But won't remain so."

"Cut it off."

In a few minutes Manette's beautiful tresses were severed, and her hair trimmed into the fashion of a boy.

Manette then changed her clothing again in her own room, and darkened the skin of her face and hands with a preparation.

Looking in the glass, she then said:

"That will do. I think I can deceive now even the man who knew me last night."

Manette then bought a stout, strong horse, and mounting, rode out of the city in the direction of the homes of the half-breeds in the great Northwest.

CHAPTER XVI.

"CAN you feed my horse?"

The day was a very cold one.

Snow had been falling, and although it had now cleared off, the northwest wind was howling along the narrow road through the woods, and blowing a very blizzard.

Frank Fearless, on his mission for the league, had faced the blast until he could plainly see that his horse was giving out.

At this juncture he arrived at a small clearing, in the center of which was a blacksmith shop.

Fearless drove up and asked the question:

"Can you feed my horse?"

The blacksmith laid down his hammer, saying:

"Yes."

He led the way into the shop, leading the horse after him.

The shop was warm and comfortable.

While the horse was eating, Fearless asked:

"How far is it to the next town?"

"Four miles."

"Do you know a man named Grundy there?"

"He's the big man of the town. Lives in a large white house on the outskirts. I'd advise you not to go there, though, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Oh, nothing; only he's suspected."

"Of what?"

"Treason against the government?"

"Nonsense, there's no conspiracy."

The blacksmith looked keenly at Fearless, and said:

"Did you meet the soldiers?"

"What soldiers?"

"Of the government. They've been searching old Grundy's house for arms and ammunition."

"Did they find any?"

"No; the old fox is too sharp for them. Hallo! here come two of the soldiers now."

The soldiers were mounted troopers.

They dismounted outside the door, tied and blanketed their horses and entered the shop.

They were rough-looking fellows, who seemed to take in everything at a glance.

One of them, looking keenly at Fearless, said:

"Rough day, sir."

"It is."

"Come far?"

"Thirty miles."

"What's your business?"

"That's my affair."

The trooper laughed, saying:

"That's so; but we've a reason for asking."

"What is it?"

"Well, there's a rumor that some spies against the government are to be sent this way from Montreal."

"I'm from Quebec."

"You ain't a Canadian, are you?"

"No; I'm a native of the United States."

"Is your name Fearless?"

"Certainly not."

"What is it, then?"

"Johnson."

"H'm! You'd better tell us your business. We've got orders to arrest all suspicious persons."

Fearless was surprised to learn that his coming to the Northwest was known.

How the news had arrived ahead of him, and who had sent it, he could not imagine.

Undoubtedly a description of his personal appearance had also been sent.

He had, however, little fear of being recognized, being well disguised.

Thinking best not to provoke the man, he said:

"I'm in the lumber business."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes. I've come up here to make a contract with Mr. Grundy."

"You'd better fight shy of him. He's one of the worst rebels in this section."

"What's that my business if I can buy lumber cheap? I have nothing to do with your government squabbles."

Frank's horse had stopped feeding.

Paying the blacksmith, he mounted and rode on.

The troopers looked at each other, and the one who had done all the talking, said:

"That man can't be Fearless."

"Fearless has no beard."

"No; and this fellow has a heavy one."

"I've known men to wear bogus ones. I'll tell you, comrade, we ought to have searched that chap."

"We can do it yet."

"How?"

"Ride through the pass and cut him off."

"We can do it; his horse is jaded, ours fresh. Come on, we'll overtake that fellow and go through him."

They mounted and rode off, leaving the blacksmith biting his nails and thinking:

"I wish I could warn that man. Come to think of it, I believe the beard was false. Confound those government fellows! I never liked the hounds, and never will. Hello! who's this?"

A dark youth, with a small black mustache, entered the shop.

His horse was a black Canadian, with a frame that would endure a great deal of hardship in that country in winter.

Holding his hands over the fire in the forge, he said:

"Has a gentleman riding a bay horse passed here?"

"He left here not five minutes ago."

"Which way?"

"To the north."

The blacksmith continued after a moment:

"I'd like to ask you a question, sir."

"Go on."

"Are you a friend of that gentleman?"

"I am."

"Well, he's in danger."

"Danger!"

"Yes, the soldiers are after him."

"How many?"

"Two."

Manette, for it was she, waited to hear no more.

Springing to her horse, she mounted without assistance and rode away at full speed.

Fearless, having no idea that he would be followed by the troopers, did not urge his horse.

Half-way from the blacksmith shop to the village the road ran through a deep gully between two hills.

In the center of the gully a path led down the side of one of the hills.

As Fearless approached this pass the troopers stepped out and confronted him, saying:

"Halt!"

Fearless pulled up his horse.

The troopers were not mounted, having left their horses on the other side of the gully, behind the hill.

Each held a drawn pistol.

Fearless asked:

"What do you want?"

"Come down off that horse."

"Suppose I don't?"

"Then we'll persuade you."

"What's your object?"

"To search you."

"I see; you want my money."

"Not by a long chalk. We ain't in the thieving business; we want to see if you're an infernal spy. What an elegant set of whiskers you've got! I wonder how you managed to grow 'em in such a hurry."

Fearless saw that he was discovered.

He had some secret papers upon him, the surrender of which was not to be thought of.

But how could he help it?

The troopers had him covered with their pistols, and to attempt to escape would draw their fire.

"Come," said a trooper impatiently. "Get down."

"I refuse."

"Then we'll pull you off."

The young American prepared to defend himself, when a diversion occurred.

The black horse of Manette appeared on the top of the hill by the gully.

Not a pause did the black horse make.

Giving him a slash with the whip Manette leaped him down, a fearful jump, and drew him by Fearless' side.

In her right hand she held her riding-whip, and brought it down across the eyes of the troopers, for the moment almost blinding them.

Then she cried out to Fearless:

"Away!"

Down came the whips upon the horses, and away they bounded.

Bang! bang! went the pistols of the troopers.

The bullets flew harmlessly past.

The troopers were so nearly blinded, for the time, they could not see where to aim.

For a moment, until they were out of the gully, nothing was said between Frank and Manette.

Then Frank said:

"You have done me a great service.

"Make the best of it and escape."

"They'll overtake us. Their horses are fresher than ours."

Manette laughed, saying:

"They'll not find them in a hurry."

"How's that?"

"I untied their horses and gave each a cut with the whip. They're a mile from the gully by this time."

"How did you know the troopers meant treachery?"

"The blacksmith told me."

"I'll never forget the service."

"Don't mention it."

"Are you against the government?"

"Of course, or I wouldn't have helped you."

"How do you know I'm against it?"

"Oh, I know many things."

"My name you know, perhaps?"

"It's Fearless."

"And yours—"

"Call me Benjamin."

Fearless, after a moment, said:

"I was going to Grundy's."

"And I."

"I'm not sure we ought to go there now."

"Why not?"

"We may get him into trouble."

"No fear. He'll secrete us so that all the troopers in the province can't find us."

"You seem to know him."

Manette replied, evasively:

"I've heard of him."

They reached the place, and drove through the grounds up to the door of the large house.

An old man with white hair, but straight as an arrow, met them.

In a few hurried words Fearless told who he was and what had happened.

Grundy smiled and said:

"You're safe here. Peter."

A thick-set man came out.

Grundy said:

"Take these horses and put them where they won't be found. Come in, gentlemen, come in."

The house was handsomely furnished, and gave evidence of the wealth of the owner.

Grundy continued:

"The troopers will be here soon. They'll find their horses and ride like mad."

He sat by the window watching.

Suddenly he said:

"There they are. Come with me."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE troopers came thundering up to the door.

There were seven of them now, the two having been joined by five others.

They knocked loudly on the door with the handles of their riding-whips.

Grundy smiled, saying:

"Let 'em knock."

He touched a spring in the wainscoting, and opened a sliding panel.

"Go in," he said. "You will be quite safe, only make no noise."

He went down to the door, opened it, and said:

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?"

The sergeant replied, gruffly:

"If it takes you as long to die as it did to open that door, you'll be lucky."

"Come in, gentlemen; come in out of the cold. I'll order your horses stabled."

"You needn't mind. Look here, Grundy."

"Well?"

"Where are those spies?"

"What spies?"

"You know well enough."

"Oh, I see. Did one ride a black, and the other a bay horse?"

"Yes."

"Then you'll find 'em to the north'ard. They dashed by here at a dead run, and kept straight on up the road."

"They did?"

"They certainly did."

"I can't trust you, old man. You haven't too good a name for loyalty. We'll search the house."

"And welcome."

"And if they're found here you'll go to Quebec. Two of you men go search the stables. Two more of you watch around the house, so that nobody can get out. Come on, the rest of you."

The sergeant and his two remaining men entered the house, taking Grundy with them.

They searched the premises from top to bottom, and were no wiser than when they came.

Grundy said grimly:

"Are you satisfied?"

"We'll have to be. But look here, you old rebel, I believe there's something crooked about this yet. If we find out—"

"You'll find nothing wrong here, gentlemen. Will you have some refreshments?"

They did not decline the wine and brandy, and having enough, drove off.

Grundy smiled and muttered:

"Good riddance."

Then he went to the secret panel, opened it, and said:

"Come out, friends."

For two days Manette and Fearless were entertained like princes at the house of Grundy.

They had another visit from the troopers, but the old man was not to be caught napping, and had them safely concealed.

A list of all the members of the league in that section of the province was made out and given to Frank to forward to the headquarters of the league.

It had been intended that he should make a personal inspection of the province, but after the adventure with the troopers, it was deemed too risky.

On the third night came the most dangerous part of the undertaking, and it was destined to be fraught with events so momentous to the plans of the secret leaguers as could not have been conceived beforehand.

A large quantity of arms and ammunition for the use of the avengers in Quebec was hidden on the property of Grundy.

It was necessary that these should be taken away at once, for the time was about ripe for the uprising, and the sooner the decisive blow was struck the better.

Grundy had provided four large double sleighs, each to be drawn by two powerful horses.

The sleighs were ostensibly to be loaded with lumber, but underneath the lumber, and in the double bottoms and sides of each sleigh were a hundred revolvers and a large amount of cartridges.

Other horses than those they had ridden were furnished Frank and Manette, for the black and bay would have been recognized.

Other disguises were also furnished by Grundy.

At midnight of the third night all was ready.

Grundy said:

"You have six hours before daylight. In that time you ought to go forty miles, even with the loaded sleighs, for the sleighing is good. It is eighty miles to Quebec. You ought to make the rest of the distance to-morrow."

The drivers of the four sleighs were members of the league who could be trusted.

No bells were used, the idea being to drive through the night as silently as possible.

Away they went, and for the first twenty miles all went well.

It was three o'clock in the morning.

The moon had come up.

They were driving by the river, along which the road skirted a mile before the bridge was reached.

The river was filled with floating ice, for the tide had risen suddenly and broken the ice into cakes, which rushed downward, grinding and grating against each other, with the current.

Suddenly, when they were within a hundred yards of the bridge, a squad of troopers sprung out of the woods into the road.

At their head was Hunter, the detective.

He cried out sternly:

"Halt and dismount!"

Fearless rode up to him and said:

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Hunter, the detective, and I want the arms and ammunition concealed under that lumber. Come, dismount!"

There was nothing for it but to obey.

Gritting his teeth, Fearless dismounted, as did Manette.

Hunter said more kindly:

"Well, you're caught at last."

"Is there any law against carting lumber?"

"No."

"Why, then, do you interfere with me?"

"There is a law against carrying weapons for the purposes of rebellion. I am sorry for you, but it is my duty to lock you up."

"Where are the weapons?"

"In the double bottom, sides, and under the lumber. Men, throw off one of those loads."

Several of the soldiers commenced.

Frank saw that the situation was hopeless.

He looked around for a way of escape.

There seemed none.

They were surrounded on all sides except that by the flowing river.

Up to this time Manette had remained silent.

But now her boiling half-breed blood got the better of her, and she cried out:

"You mercenary hirelings!"

Slap! came the heavy hand of a trooper across her face.

Manette fell in the snow.

Frank Fearless uttered a mad cry.

He sprang forward, and in an instant the trooper fell like a stone.

"Good," muttered the detective, who did not like his job, although it was his duty to do it. "An American blow straight from the shoulder. Heaven! Come back, mad man, come back!"

Frank had caught up Manette.

Throwing her light form over his shoulder, he sprang out upon the cakes of ice, making for the other shore.

The troopers drew their pistols.

"Hold!" cried Hunter. "The man who fires, dies!"

From cake to cake of ice leaped Fearless.

Hunter groaned.

"Will he do it? Will he save the girl? Pray God he will. Ah, Heaven, he's down!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Fearless and Manette attempted to cross the ice-choked river, one of the soldiers laughed, exclaiming:

"Ha! ha! They've gone from us to death!"

The detective turned upon him quickly.

He caught the soldier by the neck and shook him roughly.

Then he cried out:

"You brute! Do you make light of the struggles of two dying persons? Another word like that and I'll fling you into the water after them."

The officer commanding the soldiers said:

"And serve him right!"

Fearless was down and in desperate peril.

He had attempted to spring from one cake of ice to another.

The cake had turned, and in an instant he found himself in the river, with the ice cakes whirling madly past him.

The young American set his teeth.

He did not let go his grip of Manette.

The current threw him against a cake of ice.

He clutched it with one hand, and with the other managed to lift Manette out of the water.

Fearless still remained in the river.

He could not climb out of the water, for the surface of the cake of ice was very slippery.

As often as he climbed part way out he would slip back again.

He was becoming exhausted.

Manette still lay insensible on the ice.

A fortunate incident happened.

Another cake of ice, the size of the one on which Manette lay, came whirling down.

It struck Fearless on the shoulder.

Then it became jammed against other masses of floating ice, and the whole mass stopped.

Fearless was between the two cakes of ice, which were not more than two feet apart.

Placing an elbow on each, he drew himself out.

But, unfortunately, he reached the cake of ice joining that on which Manette lay.

Another swish of the tide!

The icy field was once more broken up.

Down the river went the ice, with Frank Fearless standing on one piece and Manette lying on another—*separated!*

The ice drifted in toward shore.

Frank cried out wildly:

"Manette!"

Then the cakes came together.

With one bound Fearless was upon the piece where Manette lay.

She was still insensible.

He caught her to him, crying:

"Oh, thank God!"

Then he ran across the ice, which by this time was blocked together.

The detective had been looking.

He had cried out, after he shook the soldier:

"They are lost!"

And he had prevented the troops from shooting.

Now he said:

"Across the bridge!"

It was Hunter's duty to capture Fearless.

That was the reason why he cried out "Across the bridge!"

Although Fearless and Manette were together again, they were not by any means safe.

Had it not been for one fortunate circumstance, they would undoubtedly have been captured.

The reader will remember that the wagon train was captured when it was only about one hundred yards from the bridge.

Now, however, when Fearless landed with the insensible form of Manette in his arms, the current, running swiftly, had carried them down the river almost a mile.

When Hunter, then, cried out, "Across the bridge!" the soldiers and himself had to go at least a mile to intercept them.

How cold it grew!

Fearless was wet. Manette was cold and nearly frozen.

Now came out the inherent pluck of the young American.

He saw the soldiers, on horseback, ride across the bridge.

Then he cried out despairingly:

"Hunted down!"

He gave it up. Then, looking around, he saw the woods.

He held Manette in his arms.

Then, looking at Hunter, he set his teeth, and in a second after shouted:

"Never say die!"

As the soldiers charged over the bridge, Frank Fearless, bearing Manette upon his arm, ran into the woods.

Where to go he knew not.

He ran on, staggering.

Hunter, in the chase, was groaning.

It was the first instance, perhaps, in the life of a detective, when he was hunting down a man against his will.

He wanted Frank Fearless and Manette to escape, but it was his duty to capture them.

When the troops reached the woods, led by Hunter, they saw, in the snow, the footprints of Fearless.

They tracked him.

The trail stopped. The snow had been driven off a rock by the wind, and not a footprint could be seen.

The detective looked everywhere.

There was not a track in the snow except that made by the pursuing party and Fearless when he carried Manette.

Hunter, who was now on his mettle, and for the moment thought little of friend or foe, looked around and said to the sergeant of the party:

"This is a miracle."

He could not account for it.

"Look!" he cried out. "The footprints in the snow leading here. You see! Where do the footprints end? Right here. Where do they continue? Nowhere."

He was right.

There was not a step, a print, a mark off the bare, naked rock, except in the direction in which they had come.

He said distinctly:

"Soldiers, they must have flown."

The troopers were, as are all of their class, superstitious.

The detective was not so superstitious. He knew that the fugitives must have escaped by natural means, but said only:

"We must find them."

That was well enough said, but how to do it was the question.

The search, which was protracted, ended.

The detective said:

"Let us go away."

Hunter was baffled.

Had it been his own father he was hunting he would not, *now*, have allowed his sympathy to have weight.

He gave up the search, chagrined, and led the troopers again across the bridge.

The sergeant said:

"What are we to do with these wagons?"

"Drive to the nearest town."

"That's a mile."

"Certainly."

"Where can that man be?"

"Where can they *both* be?"

Hunter, after saying this, shrugged his shoulders. Not another word did he speak, but walked by the side of the horses until the town was reached.

What had become of Frank Fearless?

Where was Manette?

A fortunate incident had happened to the young American.

As he ran, carrying Manette in his arms, across the rock, wet, dripping, almost frozen, he felt the rock give way.

There was a ledge—a shelf, it might be called—and the ledge tipped downward, throwing him and Manette to the ground beneath.

Then the rock fell down.

One end rested on the top of the rock above, and the other on the ground below.

In the interstice thus formed, Fearless and Manette were imprisoned.

They were in what might be called a living tomb. It was a fortunate circumstance, so far as present immunity from their pursuers was concerned, but how were they to get out?

The pursuers came by.

They heard the sergeant say:

"Here are the tracks."

The detective replied:

"But they suddenly end."

The tracks did not go as far as the ledge.
 The snow had fallen from the rock when it came
 down and covered up the footprints.
 The sergeant said:
 "Suppose we scatter and search."
 Hunter replied:
 "That will be the best plan."
 They did so, each going in a different direction,
 looking for tracks, as has been said.
 Fearless whispered to Manette:
 "We've thrown them off the track."
 "Yes, but——"
 "Well?"
 "How about getting out?"
 "We'll manage it."

The soldiers came back, as has been said, recrossed
 the bridge to the horses, and drove toward the
 town.

It was only a few minutes' journey, in the direc-
 tion of Quebec.

Reaching it, they had the horses stabled, pulled
 the sleighs under a shed, and confined the drivers in
 an outhouse where there was a fire.

It was Hunter's determination to linger in the
 vicinity some days, believing that the fugitives could
 not go far in the cold weather, through the snow,
 without detection.

They certainly could not reach Quebec.

The detective was not, in his heart, sorry that the
 fugitives had escaped.

But he hated to be *baffled*.

Moreover, it was his duty to capture them, now
 that they had been found in the actual commission
 of a crime against the government, and he meant to
 do it.

Midnight came. All was quiet.

A guard had been set over the sleighs, and an-
 other over the prisoners in the outhouse.

Every person in the inn had gone to bed.

Suddenly two figures approached the shed, under
 which the sleighs were kept.

The taller said:

"There are the sleighs."

"But the guard!"

"I see none."

"There must be one."

Then the one who first spoke said:

"Guard or no guard, we must have them."

The voice was stern and firm.

It sounded like the voice of Fearless.

CHAPTER XIX.

FEARLESS, when we left him and Manette under
 the rock, had not recognized her.

He had not the slightest idea that his companion
 was a woman and the girl he loved.

She trembled with cold, saying:

"We'll freeze here."

"Are you very cold?"

"Yes; for we're wet to the skin."

He took off his heavy overcoat and wrapped it
 around her, hoping it would afford some additional
 warmth, although it was very wet.

Manette protested.

Fearless paid no attention, except to say:

"You're younger than myself."

She said no more.

The deadly stupor of those who are freezing was
 creeping over her.

Her clothing was freezing on her.

She no longer shuddered.

Fearless shook her.

He had no hesitation in pounding her a little.

He would not let her lie down, but kept her mov-
 ing around the narrow place.

Suddenly there was a movement at one of the
 ends of the place.

An avalanche had fallen from the top of the hill
 above.

It came rushing and tumbling down, and carried
 away the rocks that blocked up one end of the
 cavern.

The light shone in.

Fearless gave a cry of joy.

He cried out to Manette:

"See! We are free!"

The news revived her.

She, too, uttered a cry of joy.

Fearless rushed her out of the cave.

Outside it was still colder, owing to a fierce north-
 west wind which had sprung up.

Fearless would not let Manette walk, neither
 would he carry her.

He made her run.

Away they went, half a mile, to a bend in the
 road.

A farmhouse came into view.

A dog ran out to meet them.

Through the yard they ran, threw open the door
 of the house, and burst into it, Fearless crying
 out:

"Give two freezing people shelter!"

A man of middle age was in the room.

He was of stout build, and had the look of a Ca-
 nadian farmer.

He arose, saying:

"Warm yourselves and go."

"We must have shelter."

"You can't find it here."

"We want dry clothing."

"You'll get nothing."

"You won't give us clothing until ours are dry?"

"No!"

"You shall!"

The man laughed, saying:

"Compel me, then."

"I will."

As Fearless spoke a girl came into the room from
 the adjoining apartment.

She was young and pretty, but seemed troubled.

"Uncle," she said.

He replied gruffly:

"What is it, Marie?"

"You must help them."

"I say no."

"They need other clothes."

"They'll not get 'em here."

"Why not?"

"They are conspirators and spies."

"Spies?"

"Yes. Do you remember the soldiers who were
 here?"

"Certainly."

"They told me all about them. They fell into
 the river, crossing the ice. They have escaped the
 soldiers and come here for shelter."

The girl said gently:

"Poor things!"

"You sympathize with them?"

"I do."

The farmer boiled with rage.

He cried out loudly:

"You two leave. You'll get nothing here."

Manette and Fearless were sitting by the fire,
 which was composed of pitch-pine logs in a wide
 fireplace.

The young American arose.

He said:

"I told you that you should help us; you shall, by
 Heaven!"

He caught the man by the throat and threw him
 to the other side of the room.

Marie screamed once, but did not offer to inter-
 fere.

She sympathized with the *cause* of the fugitives,
 as well as with themselves.

Fearless drew a pistol.

It had been several minutes under water, but the cartridges were patent metallic, and could remain wet indefinitely without injury.

He pointed it at the man and said:

"Get up."

The man arose; he scowled at Fearless; he said to the American:

"Give me an equal chance."

Fearless replied:

"Do as I tell you, or I'll shoot you. Come over to the fire. Remember, you have to deal with a desperate man."

When this was done, Fearless continued to Marie:

"Please get us some dry clothing."

Marie sprung up with alacrity.

The farmer thundered:

"Don't!"

Marie paid no attention.

She returned in a few minutes with clothing, part of which she placed before each fugitive.

Manette blushed.

She whispered to Marie:

"Take me somewhere else. I am a woman."

Not even by a look did the girl betray the knowledge thus suddenly imparted.

She arose and said:

"Young sir, I'll take you into another room."

The other apartment was small, but comfortably furnished.

A bright fire burned upon the hearth.

It was Marie's own room.

The girl said:

"You can have some of my clothes."

"I wish my sex to remain unknown."

"Does the gentleman outside know it?"

"No; he is my lover."

Marie, who was romantic, said:

"Oh!"

She was pleased at the *denouement*. She asked no further questions, but assisted Manette to disrobe and put on the other clothing.

Then they sat down before the fire, and Manette, in a few words, told Marie something of her history.

The girl replied:

"I also am in trouble. My parents are dead. I have money and property in New York. Last summer I came here on a visit to my uncle. Since then I have been unable to get away. There is no other woman in the house. My uncle wants my money, and to get it proposes to compel me to marry his son, who is now in Quebec. He will return to-morrow morning. He will return with a marriage license."

"Why haven't you escaped to Quebec?"

"I have been constantly watched by one or the other of them. Besides, I am not courageous like you. I am constitutionally nervous and timid."

"Will you go with us to-night when we go?"

Marie hesitated and said:

"I will."

"How many horses has your uncle here?"

"Three."

"That will do. Now we must go into the other room, and not together. No one must know that you have been with me while I changed my clothing."

"I'll go out another way."

Marie left the room by another door.

Manette entered the room where Fearless and the farmer sat.

Marie remained away more than an hour, and then returned and said:

"We'll have dinner."

She set the table and brought in the food.

The sullen, scowling farmer would not eat, but the others made a hearty meal.

During the afternoon Manette found the oppor-

tunity to tell Fearless about Marie, and that she was going with them.

Marie fed the horses and groomed them, assisted by Manette, for, of course, Fearless could not leave the farmer.

Before midnight they commenced preparations.

A quantity of rope was brought.

Fearless tied and gagged the farmer, and put him to bed, saying:

"If the fire goes out, we know he won't freeze before his son returns."

He then went to the stables, saddled the horses and led them out.

He was now subjecting himself to a double penalty.

He could be arrested for stealing the horses of the farmer, which is a great offense in Canada.

But, as they mounted and rode away, he said to himself:

"The end is worth the risk. And I'll have those horses and sleighs, too, if it's in the power of man to do it."

CHAPTER XX.

As they rode slowly toward the village the young American said to Manette:

"I was intrusted with the care of the horses and sleighs containing the arms. They were taken from us. I must have them back."

Manette, with the hot blood of two nations rushing through her veins, was charmed by the determination and courage of her lover.

She said, quickly:

"It seems impossible."

"The attempt must be made, or I can never show myself again in Montreal. Will you help me?"

"I will."

"Let us, then, ride on."

As they rode on Fearless unfolded his plans.

He had passed through the village on the way from Quebec, and knew the location of the inn.

He was sure the troopers would stop them.

Avoiding the inn for the present, they halted on the outskirts of the village, on the opposite side.

Fearless said to Manette:

"Marie must stop here and wait for us. If we are captured she must ride on at full speed for Quebec."

He gave her the name and address of the stationer, and continued:

"Go to him and he will take care of you. Once with him you'll be perfectly safe."

Marie promised.

Turning to Manette, Fearless continued:

"Will you go with me?"

"Yes."

"And do exactly as I say?"

"Certainly."

"Come, then."

They rode back cautiously, this time in the direction of the inn, the feet of their horses making no noise in the snow.

"When within a hundred yards of the inn, Fearless whispered:

"Dismount."

In a moment they were out of the saddle.

The horses were tied to trees.

Fearless again whispered:

"Now follow me."

A few yards further on the conversation ensued which has already been recorded.

They could not account for the absence of the sentinel.

Suddenly Manette said:

"I see a light."

"Where?"

"To the left."

A light was shining dimly through an aperture,

which was the small grated window of the outhouse in which the drivers were confined.

It was the light from the fire only, which now burned dim.

The American whispered:

"Be careful now, my lad."

From the shadow of a small building they narrowly examined the outhouse.

The figure of the sentinel could be dimly seen as he paced to and fro before the door.

He was slapping his arms across his chest to keep them warm, and muttering:

"Confound this beastly service! I didn't enlist to stand guard on such a night as this."

Fearless muttered:

"We'll have an easy job of this."

"What do you intend doing?"

"Capture that man."

He felt her shiver, and said:

"Are you cold?"

"No."

"Afraid?"

"Only for you; you'll run into great danger."

"You had better go back."

The half-breed girl said, almost fiercely:

"Not if my lover goes forward!"

"Your lover!"

Manette saw that she had made a mistake.

She tried to correct it, saying:

"I love you, as well as a boy can love a man. You love me, or you would not have incurred almost certain death by carrying me across the floating ice. Doesn't that make you my lover?"

Fearless smiled as he dreamily replied:

"I esteem you, lad, but really love but one."

"And that one is—"

"Manette."

The eyes of the half-breed girl glistened, then they became soft as those of the dove, and she said softly:

"Ah, Manette! Can she deserve a hero?"

"I am no hero, lad."

"You are—you are!"

She seized his hand and kissed it.

"Hero!" she whispered. "Manette's hero! Ah! if I could ever be like you!"

A moment more and she could not have avoided disclosing her identity.

Her hot, swift blood would have carried her away.

But at that moment Fearless whispered:

"Look! The sentinel has retired from the building. His back is toward us; come!"

He crossed the open space between them and the outbuilding, and stood behind a corner of it, concealed from the view of the sentinel.

Then he whispered:

"Stay here."

"What are you going to do?"

"You'll see."

The sentinel was not six feet away.

His back was still toward them.

Measuring the distance, Fearless bounded forward.

Striking the sentinel between the shoulders, he knocked him prostrate.

The soldier's musket was hurled ten feet.

Fearless said fiercely:

"Not a word, or you die!"

And at the same time he pressed the cold muzzle of his pistol against the man's temple.

The soldier was brave enough, but did not relish the idea of dying when death could do no good.

He growled out sullenly:

"I surrender."

Fearless tied him hand and foot with cords he had brought with him for the purpose.

Then, dragging him to the door of the outbuilding, he said:

"Who is in there?"

"A lot of sleigh-drivers."

"I'll take the key."

He felt for it and found it. Then he said to Manette:

"Have you a pistol, my lad?"

"Yes."

"Guard this man."

Hunter stepped to the door of the building, unlocked it, and stepped inside.

The drivers were sleeping before the fire.

Fearless roused them, and said.

"If you'd escape, come."

They comprehended the state of affairs instantly.

They trooped out of the door.

Fearless said:

"Carry that man inside."

They laid him down before the fire, as they had been, then gagged him with a handkerchief, and left him there, locking the door.

They then went to the sleighs.

The sound of heavy breathing was heard.

The sentinel was found fast asleep on one of the loads of lumber.

He had taken buffalo-ropes enough from the stable to make a warm bed.

In a few minutes he was bound, gagged, and carried into the barn.

There he was left, covered warmly, so that by no means could he freeze to death.

Then, all in silence, the horses were taken out and hitched to the sleighs.

Manette and the young American mounted their horses.

The word was given to start.

Marie was found patiently waiting.

Then the word was given:

"Ten miles an hour."

Five miles were made.

They were in the woods, and it was dark.

The three on horseback were leading.

Suddenly the horse of Fearless came in contact with that of another, who cried out:

"What, in the fiend's name, are you about?"

Marie said, in a low voice:

"Oh, Heaven! it's my uncle's son."

Fearless said:

"Beg, pardon, sir. We're in charge of a load of lumber, bound for Quebec. We're afraid of a thaw to-morrow, and so drive fast."

"Go on, then, and get out of the way."

This circumstance, so trivial in its way, was the cause of much trouble.

Twenty-five miles more were made, and the snow was frozen hard as ice.

The horses' feet gave out a loud sound.

Suddenly one of the drivers called to Fearless, saying:

"We're pursued. The troopers are after us!"

His practiced ear had heard the sound of the voice of the sergeant hurrying on his men, although it was a mile off.

The horses of the fugitives were put to the top of their speed.

At intervals the voices of the troopers could be heard, urging on their horses.

At last the horses at the sleighs began to go slower, for they were drawing loads.

Nearer came the troopers.

They could almost be seen.

Fearless dropped back abreast of the nearest sleigh.

He said to the driver:

"What can be done?"

"I've thought of a plan."

"Name it."

"Half a mile further on a road turns off to the left. The sleighs can turn into it, and stand still

until the troopers pass and get out of hearing. Then we can drive on to a place I know of."

"Go on. We'll fall behind the sleighs."

They dropped back.

The road was reached.

Lashing their horses, the drivers drove them straight to the left.

Fearless made up his mind to sacrifice himself, if necessary, to save the freight so valuable to the patriots.

He cried out to Manette and Marie:

"Follow the sleighs!"

He dashed straight on down the main road, his object being to lead the troopers on.

Manette saw the movement and followed him.

Marie did not, but followed the sleighs.

Fearless, not seeing Manette, halloed loudly at his horse, to keep on the troopers after him.

A second later his horse slipped and fell.

Manette, in an instant, was beside him.

Down she knelt, crying out:

"Oh, my love, you're hurt!"

The troopers, led by Hunter, came in sight.

Then the half-breed girl sprung up.

The savage part of her nature was roused.

She stood over him with drawn pistol.

Every muscle was hard set.

And as she fired at the detective she cried out:

"Come on, you bloodhounds! And before you touch my darling more than one of you shall die!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE report of Manette's pistol roused Fearless.

He heard her last words:

"And before you touch my darling one of you shall die!"

He had been stunned, but now aroused himself.

Springing to his feet, he took his stand beside Manette.

The troopers had halted at a distance of fifty yards from where the young American and Manette stood.

The sergeant gave the order:

"Fire!"

A volley could hardly have failed to destroy them.

The half-breed girl cried out:

"We'll show you how to die!"

Hunter was in advance.

He shouted:

"Hold your fire!"

He was really in command of them. They did not dare disobey.

The sergeant said gruffly:

"Do you mean to let 'em escape?"

"How can they escape? Don't you see they're dismounted and utterly at our mercy?"

"But—"

"Silence!"

The abashed sergeant said no more. Hunter called out to the fugitives:

"Listen to reason."

Fearless replied:

"Say on."

"Will you surrender?"

"No."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Fight."

"It will be your destruction."

"Let it."

The detective was in a quandary.

For once, in an emergency, he did not know how to act.

He knew that it was Manette who stood by the side of Fearless.

He admired the half-breed girl.

To order the troops to fire would be to kill her.

To order them to charge and ride them down, would probably have the same result.

To kill beautiful Manette was not to be thought of.

He said kindly:

"We don't want your lives."

"But you want our liberty."

"That is not much. Surrender, since you *must* choose between that and death, and I pledge my honor that you shall be kindly treated."

Then the clear voice rang out:

"You, hireling of an oppressive government, say that liberty is not much. Listen! I am a half-breed, and have been taught to surrender life rather than liberty!"

Then Hunter changed his tactics.

He called out:

"Frank Fearless!"

"I am here."

"You love Manette, of Montreal?"

"What's that to you?"

"Would you cause the death of the girl you love?"

"What has that to do with Manette?"

"She stands by your side."

"What! here?"

"Yes, there. The girl who stands by your side is Manette. Let her deny it if she can."

Then, for the first time, Fearless comprehended. Yes, she *was* Manette.

And she had followed him to defend and protect him.

What chivalrous devotion!

At the gap between the hills, she had come between him and the soldiers, and saved him from death or capture.

She had gone with him, been ever near him, and shared all his dangers.

The idea of her death was horrible.

Everything must give way that endangered the life of the half-breed girl.

The safety of the sleighs was now of secondary consideration to him.

They and the loads they carried might be replaced, and only delay the revolutionists a little.

Manette's life, once taken, could not be replaced.

These thoughts ran through his brain in a second.

Then he called out, thinking only of the peril of his darling, the half-breed girl:

"We surrender!"

Again Manette's clear voice rang out:

"Never! Follow me, Frank Fearless. Let them chase us, *and save the sleighs!*"

As she spoke she sprung into the woods, and Fearless, with a groan of agony—no longer Fearless, but fearful for the life of the girl he worshiped—gave one loud cry, "Manette, Manette!" and sprung after her with the speed of a hunted deer.

For a moment the detective and the troopers sat on their horses spellbound.

Then springing off his horse, Hunter cried out:

"Half of you dismount and join me in the search for them. Let them not be harmed. The other half ride straight on down the road like mad and overtake the sleighs."

These orders were instantly obeyed.

Half the troopers, led by the sergeant, went flying down the road, while the rest, tying their horses, plunged into the woods, led by Hunter.

It has not yet been told how the detective discovered the escape of the drivers and recapture of the horses and sleighs so soon after the events occurred.

A short space will suffice to tell the story.

When the son of the farmer passed them on the road, he did not, it is true, recognize Marie.

But the more he thought of it, the more singular it appeared that several sleighs loaded with lumber, with a mounted man and two mounted women lead-

ing them, should be flying at such a rate of speed toward Quebec.

It was just after the execution of Riel, and owing to the rumors of an uprising among the half-breeds, every man was suspicious of an unusual occurrence.

Marie's cousin drove straight on till he reached the inn.

Riding to it, he commenced to thump on the door in a lively manner with the butt of his riding-whip.

The landlord put his head out of the window.

"What's wanted?"

"Who's here?"

"A lot of soldiers, some prisoners, and several sleighs."

"Loaded with lumber?"

"Yes."

"I'll bet a guinea they're not here now."

Hunter had been wakened, and heard the whole of the conversation.

He called out:

"I'm commander of the troops. Wait a minute."

Hurriedly dressing, he went down and obtained a glimpse only of his informant, who, having imparted his information, was riding home.

Running to the sheds, he discovered the absence of the sleighs.

Hurrying to the house, he roused the troopers.

The first place visited was the outhouse, the door of which was locked.

Breaking it in, they found the sentinel lying bound and gagged on the floor.

It took but a moment, after they released him, to learn his story.

Next they visited the stables and found the other sentinel, who told of the capture of the sleighs, but did not tell, of course, that he had been asleep.

His story was that he had been surprised, knocked on the head, bound and gagged.

Hunter knew it must have been the work of the young American and Manette.

The detective bit his lips.

He was more annoyed than he cared to confess.

To be defied and defeated he could not endure.

He was now more than ever determined to capture Fearless and Manette, although he did not want a hair of their heads harmed.

He ordered:

"Get the horses out."

This was done in a moment.

"Mount. Ride fast down the Quebec road."

The detective knew the fugitives would try to reach Quebec that night; he therefore gave the order to drive as fast as the limit of endurance of the horses would allow.

The reader knows the result.

We left Manette as she dashed into the woods, with Fearless after her.

There were several inches of snow on the ground under the trees, and they sank in at every step.

In the woods it was very dark.

Fearless stumbled along a few steps, then, fearful of missing the girl, called out in a low voice:

"Where are you, Manette?"

"Here!"

She was within ten feet of him, but he could not see her.

He was instantly at her side.

He said:

"Manette, come back."

"No."

"You'll perish here. You'll freeze."

"And you—"

"I have no thought of myself."

"Come on. They can't find us in this darkness. Oh, Frank, don't think of me."

On she went, seeming to avoid the trees intuitively, and, struggling through the snow, they pushed deeper and deeper into the woods.

The delay of the troopers gave them a good start; but could the brave young half-breed girl endure the fearful fatigue and keep it?

Fearless groaned as she toiled through the snow.

She heard, and said:

"Don't mind me, Frank," and pushed on deeper into the wood.

"They can't track us," she whispered, "for it's so dark they cannot see our foot-prints in the snow."

Fearless looked back.

"My God!" he said.

"What is it?"

"Look."

A light appeared, flickering through the trees behind them.

The troopers had a lantern and could trace them accurately, by the foot-prints in the snow.

This was an unexpected peril.

But it roused all the energy of Manette.

"Faster!" she said.

She was breathing hard. She was almost exhausted.

Fearless put his arm around her waist and supported her.

On they staggered, but the soldiers, with Hunter at their head, gained on them all the time.

An event occurred which gave them breathing time. An open space, how wide they did not know, was reached.

The high winds had blown the snow from it, leaving bare the frozen ground.

They ran out upon the open space.

Manette whispered:

"They'll think we've gone straight on."

They ran thirty yards to the south and threw themselves down on the snow behind some trees.

The light of the lantern glittered.

Hunter, who was carrying it, stepped out into the open space and flashed its light around.

Throwing his arm around Manette, Fearless prayed:

"Oh, God! let them not see my darling."

CHAPTER XXII.

"I AM alone in the woods."

Marie said this when, in less than a minute after she turned into the cross-road, she discovered that Manette and Fearless were not with her.

She stopped her horse.

Then, thinking they might have passed her when all three turned from the main road, she said:

"They must be ahead."

Marie again urged on her tired horse, and soon overtook the sleighs, which had halted about half a mile from the main road.

They had heard the firing, but could not understand what it meant, supposing that the three riders had followed them.

Halting at the end of half a mile they consulted together.

Then, for the first time, they discovered that the two girls and Fearless were missing.

Consternation was written on each face.

They were brave, honest men, and would have done much for the young American who had risked his life that very night to deliver them from the hands of the troopers.

At this moment Marie rode up.

One of the drivers cried out:

"Hurra!"

He thought the others were close behind.

One of them asked:

"Where are the other two?"

"Aren't they here?"

"No."

Explanations were soon made.

The foremost driver said:

"The soldiers have them. It was that firing we heard. They must have missed this road."

He continued, thoughtfully:

"We must go on to the black swamp. We can do them no good."

Another said:

"If they could only reach Black Jack's."

"Yes, they'd be safe there. His cabin is only half a mile further down the main road from where we were, then turn to the right another quarter."

"We must drive on."

"Yes. The troopers will soon discover their mistake and follow."

The horses were again put into a gallop.

At that moment one of the giant pines that lined the road split from the effects of the intense cold, as is often the case with very old trees of that species.

One side fell over into the road.

The crash was terrific.

Marie's horse took fright.

Taking the bit in its teeth it left the road, and with a snort of terror bounded away into the woods.

It was a wonder that the horse had not dashed its brains out against the trees, or swept Marie off by the branches.

Suddenly the horse dashed out into an open space devoid of snow.

It confronted the swinging lantern of Hunter the very moment the detective stepped out of the woods in his pursuit of Manette and Fearless.

Seeing the lantern it stopped, reared up and was about to turn round and run again, when the detective caught the bridle in his iron grip.

He quieted the horse, and then said:

"Who are you, young lady?"

Perceiving the troopers who were gathered around, Marie knew that they must belong to the pursuing party.

Betray Manette and Fearless, or her connection with them, she would not.

Gratitude for the moment made the timid girl almost brave.

She said:

"My horse took fright and ran away. I was going home."

She told no untruth, for she had indeed started on the journey to her home in New York.

Hunter said:

"If you'll wait here—which won't be long, for we're bound soon to come up with those we're after—we'll take you to the main road."

"Thanks."

"Don't move from here. Now, men, forward!"

Led by Hunter, the troops moved forward, and in a moment the light of the lantern glimmered far out into the night.

"Marie, Marie!"

The American girl started and trembled.

She was about to put spurs to her horse when the voice again cried out:

"Marie, don't move. It is I, Manette."

Marie recognized the voice. She uttered a low cry of joy and said:

"Where are you?"

"We'll come to you."

A moment later the bushes parted, and Manette and Fearless stood before her.

Explanations followed.

Then Fearless said, being once more cool and calm, now that the immediate danger to Manette had passed:

"We must leave at once. The soldiers will soon be back, not finding our trail on the other side of the open space."

"Where shall we go?"

"Back to the road again."

"They'll track us, then."

"You forgot one thing."

"What is that?"

"They must have left their horses by the roadside."

Manette cried out:

"Ah! let us hurry."

She comprehended that if they could find the horses the troopers would, for the moment, be prevented from following.

They started on the back track.

The horse made many turnings to avoid the trees; but luckily they at last struck the road not far from the horses.

One of them neighed.

"Ah!" cried Manette.

They sprung into the saddles of two. The others were started up the road with blows of the whip.

Fearless laughed, saying:

"I can imagine their feelings when they come back. I wish we could find the sleighs."

"I think we can," said Marie.

"How?"

"By finding Black Jack."

She then told what the driver had said.

"We'll try to find the place."

They rode down the road the distance stated, and came to the by-road.

Turning into it they reached, after some distance, an opening in the woods.

They came to a large log-cabin.

"This must be the place," said Fearless.

He knocked on the door.

A voice said:

"Who's dar?"

"Friends lost in the woods."

Nothing more was heard from the inside until, in a few minutes, the door was opened, and a large, burly colored man stood in the doorway.

In his hand was a candle, and he shaded his eyes with the other hand, and looked at them.

Satisfied with his scrutiny, he said:

"For de Lord, if there ain't a lady with you. Git off, all ob you, and Black Jack 'll soon hab a fire burnin'."

They dismounted and went into the cabin, while the colored man tied the horses to some staples that were driven into the logs.

He then entered the house, blew the dying embers into a blaze, threw on pitch pine knots, and soon had a roaring fire blazing up the chimney.

"Then he drew rough chairs before the fire and said in his kindly voice:

"Sit down, mas'r an' missus. Yer welcome to all Black Jack an' his ole woman hab in de house."

"Dat dey am, Jack," said a voice, and an old colored woman, fat as a dumpling, came rolling and bustling in.

It would only consume time to tell all that the colored people said.

It is enough to say that when Fearless had told them who they were, and what a strait they were in, the old people gave them their heartiest sympathy.

"Yer safe 'nough here," said Black Jack. "I'll take yer hosses whar de soldiers can't find 'em, an' den come back. Dinah, ole woman, git de hoe-cakes an' de bacon ready. Dese white folks mus' be pow'ful hungry, for sure."

He went out, and was gone fully an hour.

When he returned, he explained that he had been out to the main road, and coming back he had covered up the tracks of the horses as well as his own.

Not that he supposed that would prevent a visit of the troopers to his cabin, but, with all signs removed, it would be only guess-work, and they would look in another direction.

Black Jack had escaped from the South before the war, and was now, by dint of hard work, in comfortable circumstances.

His sons had married and bought places of their own near by, and the old couple lived alone, happy and contented.

By the time Jack had finished his story, the hoe-cakes were on the table, flanked by delicious bacon, mealy potatoes, and steaming coffee.

When they had finished, daylight was faintly struggling in through the windows.

Fearless said:

"The troopers will be here soon, Jack."

"Let 'em come, boss."

"We'll be caught."

"Not if Jack knows hisself, sah?"

"They'll search the house."

"Dat's all right."

"They'll search everywhere. We surely ought to be going."

Jack exclaimed quickly:

"Don't you tink ob dat, mas'r. I tell you dat yer safe here. Don't ye be 'larmed. Dem soldiers sha'n't hab ye if Black Jack can help it—an' he can. Ain't dat so, Dinah?"

"It just am dat, Jack."

Fearless said no more, but he was by no means easy in his mind.

He saw the folly of attempting to escape by daylight, but it seemed to him to be folly to wait there.

The troopers would be sure to search the vicinity. They would be caught like rats in a trap.

The astute colored man saw the workings of his mind, and said:

"Mas'r, trust Black Jack."

At this moment old Dinah pulled aside the window-curtain and said:

"Dey're comin', Jack."

A minute or two later the troopers, with Hunter at their head, rode leisurely up to the door.

The detective dismounted and knocked on the door with his riding-whip, crying out:

"Open up, in there."

Black Jack threw the door wide open.

Hunter stepped inside and threw his piercing glance around.

The room was empty, with the exception of himself, Black Jack, and Dinah.

And as the detective stepped inside, the colored people both bowed low, and said:

"Your servants, mas'r."

CHAPTER XXIII.

HUNTER was vexed.

He was more chagrined than he ever remembered to have been before.

When, having crossed the open space and found no footprints in the snow, he returned and discovered, by the light of the lantern, the tracks of the fugitives leading back toward the road, he saw that he had been outwitted.

But, when the detective reached the road and discovered that the horses were gone, his anger, although he was one of the best tempered of men, was great.

Since leaving Quebec he had been handicapped at every turn, and chiefly by the half-breed girl.

He was not angry at Manette, but with himself.

He admired Manette more than ever.

But he now meant to capture her at all hazards.

He knew that the fugitives had not gone toward Quebec, for the troopers were in that direction, and that they had turned northward was hardly more probable.

They must, then, be somewhere in the vicinity.

The troopers who had gone down the road now returned, and reported that the sleighs were not ahead.

Here was another mystery.

There was nothing to do but wait until morning.

Building a fire, they sat around it and shivered until the first gray streak of dawn.

All of the party who had horses mounted, the others being sent on foot to the nearest village.

The mounted men were divided into two parties, one being sent to the south and the other to the north.

Hunter went with the southern party, and soon reached the road which led to Black Jack's cabin.

There were no traces of horses having turned off there, thanks to the colored man's precautions.

But two hundred yards down the road the colored man had unfortunately left a single track uncovered.

Hunter examined it, and said:

"Where there is a single print of a horse's hoof there must have been more."

This led them to go on until the cabin of Black Jack was reached.

He then said:

"Ah! we'll see."

He rode up to the door, and knocked, with the result we have seen.

When the detective was in the cabin he took in everything at a glance.

Then, fixing his piercing eyes upon the colored man, he said:

"Where's your company, old man?"

"Fore de Lord, mas'r—"

"No nonsense. I see you're early risers."

"Yer right, boss."

"Who's with you here?"

"Not a libin' soul."

"All alone, eh?"

"Yes, sar."

"Then I'd like to know, since you're all alone, what those five plates are doing on the table?"

The old man was equal to the occasion.

He replied:

"Dem's my three sons' plates, an' Dinah's, an' mine."

"And where are your sons?"

"Done gone to de woods a-choppin', boss."

Hunter called to one of the troopers, and said:

Ride round the house and see if you can perceive any fresh tracks."

The trooper came back and reported that there were none.

Hunter said, sternly:

"How do you account for that?"

"For what, boss?"

"There being no tracks."

Black Jack seemed highly amused at such a question. He laughed and said:

"Bress yer soul, boss! dem boys had on snow-shoes, what don't make no tracks when de snow's friz as hard as dis."

"H'm! We'll search your house."

"An' welcome, boss."

The cabin was large, and contained several rooms, all of which were searched without avail.

As these cabins never have cellars, the search was concluded.

The detective then said:

"What's in your stable, old man?"

"My two ole hosses, boss."

The stable was searched; the two old horses were found, but nothing more.

Hunter returned and said:

"We're hungry, old man."

"We's plenty, gem'men."

Dinah bustled around, and soon had breakfast for them all upon the table.

Eating it hastily, and the horses being fed, Hunter paid Jack liberally and rode away.

Then the two old colored people looked at each other, and laughed until their fat sides shook.

Then the old man went to the home-made rug

that was in front of the fireplace, and drew it aside.

He lifted a door in the floor.

It was the potato hole, extending under the hearth to prevent potatoes freezing.

"Come up, chillum, de debil's gone."

Safe again. Fearless began to think they bore charmed lives.

His spirits were buoyant, and he was ready again to do and dare.

Nothing could be done until night.

Black Jack made them go to sleep after dinner, which was not until three o'clock, and did not wake them until eleven.

A steaming supper waited for them.

After eating, Black Jack went to the place in the woods where he had hidden the horses, and brought them round.

At midnight they started for the place where the sleighs were hidden.

In less than half an hour they reached it, in the center of a dense swamp, the approaches to which were so ice-bound that no trail had been left for the troopers to follow.

A circle of fires had been built, and the drivers and horses were in the center.

There being no wind in the swamp, they were very comfortable.

The horses were harnessed quickly, and they started.

When outside the swamp, Fearless offered Black Jack a roll of bills.

Persuasion was useless.

They drove away, leaving the old man standing in the road watching them until they disappeared from view.

They turned into the main road, and put the whips to their horses.

Suddenly, right before them in the darkness appeared several mounted men, the leader of whom cried:

"Halt!"

"Fearless cried out:

"Ride them down!"

It was a desperate act, well done.

On went the sleighs.

But a greater danger threatened.

A voice a hundred yards in the rear cried out:

"After them, men. We have them now."

It was the voice of Hunter.

Suspecting that the fugitives would try to reach Quebec that night, he had stationed his men at the only two roads leading into the main road near the city, he taking the upper one.

The troopers spurred their horses.

The drivers of the sleighs plied their whips.

Into the city and through the streets they went.

The troopers would have gained in a long race, but in a short one like this, the excited horses to the sleighs did not feel the weight behind them.

The foremost driver cried out:

"Two hundred yards further, and we are safe!"

They turned a corner at full run.

The sleighs swayed and pitched, but did not overturn.

Manette, Marie and Fearless were riding behind. As they turned the corner the horse of Manette, who was last, shied.

The half-breed girl was hurled to the pavement and knocked senseless.

A moment later a large gate was thrown open as if by preconcerted signal.

The sleighs dashed in, followed by Marie and Fearless.

Instantly the gate was slammed and barred.

The troopers, led by Hunter, turned the corner in time to see the last sleigh pass through.

"Hurrah!" cried the detective, "we have them now; they're caught like rats in a trap. Halt!"

He had caught sight of the form of Manette lying upon the pavement.

The troopers reined the horses back upon their haunches.

Hunter dismounted and raised Manette.

He looked at her and said:

"Poor girl!"

Mounting, with her across the pommel of his saddle, he again said:

"Forward!"

Then he rode up to the gate and cried out:

"Open, in the name of law!"

There was consternation on the other side of the gate.

Fearless had discovered that Manette was missing.

Her horse had come in with them riderless.

He cried out wildly:

"My God! she's killed, or else the soldiers have her! Open the gate! Open the gate, I tell you, and let me out!"

He sprang toward the gate.

The leader of the drivers exclaimed:

"Madman, what would you do?"

"Rescue Manette! I'll fight them all, and rescue my love or die!"

He sprang again toward the gate.

Three men threw themselves upon him and held him back.

He was half wild with agony and shrieked:

"Cowards! Let me go, I tell you!"

Then he struggled like a madman to get to the gate, unbar it, and go out to fight for Manette.

And in the midst of the struggle the deep voice of Hunter was heard again, crying:

"Open to us, or we'll batter down the gate!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

"WE'LL batter down the gate!"

Thus cried Hunter the second time, with Manette still on the horse before him.

There was no answer from those inside.

They could hear the young American crying, begging and demanding that he might be released to go out to Manette and fight for her.

The act would have been madness.

He could not possibly have succeeded in rescuing Manette, and had the gate been open the troops would at once have captured the sleighs with their valuable loads, and all within the yard.

The leader of the drivers, who was a man of common sense and judgment, reasoned with Fearless, who, cooling down, at last saw the folly of his course.

He said, in a voice which showed how nearly he was exhausted by the violence of his emotions:

"It is safe to let me go now."

"Will you be calm?"

"Yes."

"And promise not to open the gate?"

"I promise."

The driver released him, saying:

"If you would save your companion you must go to work with caution."

"I know it."

At that moment the voice of Hunter was heard calling to the troopers:

"Dismount and throw yourselves against the gate."

A moment more and there was a crash.

The head driver laughed.

"Ha! ha!"

Hunter cried from the outside:

"They laugh at us."

The driver answered, tauntingly:

"Get in if you can."

"We'll be there, never fear."

The driver said to Fearless, in a low tone:

"And he'll find his birds flown."

Fearless replied:

"We're cooped up here."

"We won't stay long."

"Is there any way out except by the gate?"

"Certainly."

"Why, then, don't you go?"

The driver pointed upward, saying:

"Do you see that dark cloud?"

"I see it."

"When that makes objects as dark as they will be, we'll go."

Meanwhile, Hunter was worried about Manette.

The night was intensely cold, and he was afraid that the half-breed girl, lying in his arms insensible, would become chilled through and freeze.

She must be placed under shelter.

He said to the sergeant:

"You must obtain ladders and scale the wall."

"Where can we get them?"

"That you must find out. I must take this prisoner to a doctor. I'll be back before you're ready."

The detective rode rapidly away.

He did not draw rein until he reached a modest house nearly in the center of the city.

He rang the bell loudly, and whistled through a speaking-tube.

A voice answered through the tube:

"What's wanted?"

"The doctor."

"Is the case urgent?"

"Yes. The patient's at the door."

"Wait a moment."

The door was opened.

The detective left his well-trained horse standing and carried Manette into the house.

The servant showed him into the office, and, lighting the gas, said:

"The doctor will come at once."

It was now between two and three o'clock in the morning.

The office door opened. The detective said:

"Good-morning, doctor."

"Ah! Mr. Hunter."

"Yes," said the detective, placing Manette, who was still insensible, on a sofa. "I have here a patient who requires your skill."

"I shall be glad to give it."

It was a woman who had entered; a fine-looking, kindly-faced woman of forty, whose high white brow showed natural ability and much culture.

Hunter had brought Manette to the foremost female physician of Quebec.

The doctor continued:

"How did he receive his injuries?"

"By a fall from a horse. I must tell you, though, that the patient is a girl."

And he continued:

"She is a political prisoner."

"This girl?"

"Yes, and one of the most dangerous of all the conspirators against the government. I shall leave her here for you to examine into her injuries. But I must have your word that you'll not suffer her to escape."

The doctor replied coldly:

"Mine is the art of healing. I am not accustomed to add to it the role of jailer."

Hunter replied quietly:

"Understand me. I do not wish to be hard upon this girl. I might have taken her directly to the police-station and delivered her over to the authorities, where her injuries would have been looked into by the physicians. I wished to spare her this humiliation, and have done so."

"I understand."

"And you'll do as I wish?"

"Carry her up-stairs."

When Manette was laid upon the bed, the doctor said:

"Now you may go. If it is possible to save her life, I'll do it."

"Do you anticipate danger?"

"I don't like the color her face is assuming."

Hunter left the house, and mounting his horse, rode back to the soldiers.

On the way his thoughts were anything but pleasant.

Had he been the means of causing the death of the impetuous, courageous half-breed girl?

The thought was not agreeable to the detective.

He did not like to fail, but said to himself:

"I would rather make the most ignominious of failures than that Manette should die."

Reaching the soldiers, he found that they had procured ladders and were placing them against the wall.

At a given signal they mounted them, rushed to the top of the wall, and dropped over into the yard.

Then they flashed around the light of their lanterns.

The yard was empty.

The explanation was simple enough.

The yard was back of a large house, in the center of which was an archway, closed by a door.

The door was not very strong, but some trouble was experienced breaking it down.

A driveway was disclosed, leading to the street beyond.

Hunter shrugged his shoulders, saying:

"H'm! The trap leaked. The fellows knew where they were going when they came here, and knew their way out, too."

He continued, to the sergeant:

"Unbar the gate and go around and get your horses. I'll go out through the archway."

The troopers, with some difficulty, unbarred the gate and passed through it to their horses.

Being in no hurry, and more than half angry at the trouble the chase had been giving them, in the biting cold for two successive nights, they were very deliberate in their movements, and walked their horses entirely around the block.

When they, leading Hunter's horse, arrived at the street entrance of the archway, no trace of the detective was to be seen.

They waited a moment, and then the sergeant dismounted and walked through the archway into the yard.

Hunter was not there.

The sergeant called, but received no answer.

He went back to the men and said:

"He must have gone somewhere else. What say you, men, shall we wait?"

The men muttered among themselves. At last one of them said:

"Look here, sergeant, we've been on the tramp and frozen two nights, following that detective, and what's come of it? The men want to see a bed. That chap can find his way home alone, I guess. Give the order for us all to go to a tavern and get something to eat and drink. Human nature can't stand everything."

The sergeant, nothing loath, gave the order, and the troopers rode away, leaving the detective to his fate, whatever that might be.

The secret of the detective's disappearance was as follows:

When the sleighs entered the yard there were four men there.

When they left, or just before, the head driver called Fearless aside, and said:

"If we could delay that infernal detective a little it would be a good thing."

"Can it be done?"

"I think so."

I hope so, for then we would get some information about Manette."

The driver continued:

"They'll have to get ladders and scale the fence. Then they'll unbar the gate to go back after the horses. It's probable one of 'em will go through the archway to see that all's straight there, and it's likely that that man will be the detective. My idea is to leave these four men in the secret niche in the archway. If things don't turn out as I think, they needn't show themselves. If they do, then they can leap out, capture him, and 'snake' up-stairs into the old house in a jiffy."

Fearless exclaimed eagerly:

"I'll stay with them."

"That won't do."

"Why not?"

"Because it's your duty to go with these sleighs until the cargo's safe."

"You're right."

"That won't take long, and then you can come back and 'tackle' the detective."

The driver unfolded the plan to the four men, who willingly assented.

The sleighs, with Fearless and Marie following, then droye through the archway and disappeared.

Events turned out about as the driver had predicted.

Hunter entered the archway cautiously.

The light of his lantern shone entirely through, and he could see that the way was clear.

After that he exercised less caution.

Suddenly, when about half way through, a portion of the wall seemed to fall bodily outward.

It hit Hunter and half stunned him.

He was thrown back against the opposite wall. Before he could recover, or hardly realize what had happened, four burly fellows were upon him.

In a second they had him down.

Then he felt the cold muzzle of a pistol pressed against his forehead, and a voice said:

"A word, and you're a dead man."

Perceiving that he was "in for it," the detective discreetly remained quiet.

"Quick!" said the leader.

In a second they had lifted him up, and went on a run with him through the archway into the back yard.

Entering the house, they carried him up-stairs.

Through many passages they went, for the house was old-fashioned, large and rambling, and held him firmly while one struck a light.

Then he was tied hand and foot and left lying on the floor.

Hunter, who was not in the least nervous, looked at the men intently.

He saw that not one of the drivers of the sleighs was among them.

They did not look like thieves or roughs, but rather like respectable workingmen.

Why, then, had they brought him here?

As they stood still, saying nothing, Hunter asked:

"What's your object?"

"Well, it ain't robbery."

"What is it, then?"

"Oh, you'll know."

"When?"

"Pretty soon."

"Why don't you tell me now?"

"We're waiting for another."

"Who's the other?"

"You'll see when he comes."

"Is he your leader?"

"Perhaps."

The men knew their business, and were non-committal.

Perceiving how useless it would be to question them, Hunter saved his breath and lay still.

Suddenly a knock was heard below.

One of the men said:

"There he is."

A patriot went down-stairs, and returned in a few minutes accompanied by another.

The detective said to himself:

"Frank Fearless! I begin to understand."

The young American approached.

He stood over Hunter and looked at him steadfastly. His eyes flashed, as he said:

"Man-hunter, do you know me?"

"Yes."

"For nights and days have you hunted me."

"It was my duty."

"Something else may be *my* duty."

"What is that."

"To kill you."

"You're not a murderer."

The young American drew a long breath.

His chest heaved as he cried out:

"Bloodhound, answer me! Tell me how and where my love is, or you will never leave this house alive!"

CHAPTER XXV.

To gain time Hunter said:

"Who is your love?"

"You know, sleuth-hound."

"I'd rather you would tell me."

Fearless cried, passionately:

"Manette—Manette! Who should my love be but Manette?"

One of the patriots said:

"Sir, had you not better keep a little cool?"

This brought Fearless to his senses. He saw that he would gain nothing by being rash.

He went to work more methodically, saying:

"I know that you are a government detective."

"How do you know that?"

"Because you have followed me up."

"Ah! then you must be one of the conspirators against the government."

Hunter said this so suddenly that Fearless flinched, and the detective saw the action.

He continued:

"I see you don't like that."

Fearless saw that, in a war of words, he was no match for the detective.

He returned to the original charge, saying:

"Where is Manette?"

"How should I know?"

"You do know. Remember, you are in my power. Don't try me too far. As you say, I am no murderer, or I would kill you now for all the suffering you have already caused me. I must know about Manette. If you won't tell me from fear, then, I beg you, tell me out of pity."

From the depths of his heart, the detective really pitied Frank Fearless.

But his duty would not let him tell. He said:

"She is in good hands."

"Alive?"

"Yes."

"And well?"

"She fell from her horse, but I have reason to think she is not injured seriously."

"Where is she?"

"I am not at liberty to tell you."

The detective did not know what action his answer would provoke.

He was entirely helpless, bound hand and foot.

Yet, sympathizing as he did with Fearless in the young man's misery, and willing to help him if he could do so without sacrificing his honor, he would not say one word, because it was his duty not to do so.

Never had Hunter been given so disagreeable a job as this to do.

The face of Fearless was a study.

It turned as pale as death.
His eyes glared.
He drew his pistol and said, in a voice every word of which was broken by a gasp:
"Tell me, or I shall kill you!"
The muzzle of the pistol touched Hunter's forehead, as he lay upon his back.
He closed his eyes and said:
"Then fire!"
The patriots stood around, and not one said a single word.
It was none of their affair.
They had captured Hunter, as they had been ordered by their superior, and their work was done.
For a moment Fearless held his finger on the trigger.
Then, with a shudder, he flung the pistol from him, crying out:
"I cannot kill you—you are too brave a man."
Hunter opened his eyes.
He said:
"You will never regret having spared my life."
"But Manette—Manette!"
"Is safe, I tell you."
"And will not be thrown into prison?"
"That I cannot say."
These words seemed once more to restore Fearless to himself.
For a moment he struggled for his self-command, and then said quietly:
"I shall find Manette."
"Perhaps."
"It is certain. There is not power enough on earth to keep her and me asunder. Come, men, let us go."
"Are you going to leave me here?"
"Why not?"
"It's cold."
"Sleuth-hound! how much colder do you think Manette was when, by your persistent search, she was compelled to seek refuge in the river among the cakes of ice?"
Hunter said no more.
He realized that he was not hunting down rascals, but men who, whether right or wrong, *thought* they were right, and were daring, risking all in that belief.
They all passed out of the room except one man, who lingered a moment behind.
The man looked at Hunter intently.
Then he said:
"Don't you think you're in a pretty bad fix?"
"Yes."
"And you'd like to get out of it?"
"Of course."
"Well, you can."
"How?"
"By telling where the young American girl is."
Hunter shook his head, saying:
"That won't do."
"Would you rather die?"
"Fearless won't kill me."
"But something else will."
"What is that?"
"The cold. He has forgotten that if you are left here you will freeze to death before morning."
A hope sprung up in Hunter's breast. He thought that perhaps the man had stayed behind to be bribed to set him free.
He said:
"You don't wish my death?"
"No."
"Is there any price I can name by which you might be induced to set me free?"
"There is."
"I'll give you a hundred dollars."
"No."
"Five hundred."
"No. The inducement isn't money."

"What is it, then?"
"Tell where Manette is."
Hunter turned away his face. He saw now that money would not induce the patriot to betray his trust.
And duty and honor would not let the detective tell where Manette was.
So matters stood, and so they were likely to stand—the detective "dead to rights," and the patriots, or conspirators, so far an inning ahead.
The man took up the candle.
The detective said:
"Are you going to leave me in the dark?"
"Certainly. I hope you'll stay alive till morning, when I come around again."
"I'll fight hard to live."
"No doubt. Good-night."
"Good-night," said Hunter, grimly.
The patriot went away, taking the candle.
All was darkness where the detective lay.
The black cloud still overspread the sky, and besides, it was the very darkest hour of night, about three hours before daylight.
All was quiet when the footsteps of the patriot had ceased echoing on the stairs.
The cold was intense.
Although there was, of course, no wind within the room, it was bitter, biting cold.
The detective tried to break his bonds, but soon found that it was utterly impossible.
The effort served, however, to put his blood in circulation.
He lay and thought over, in all its points, this peculiar case.
Was it retribution?
Manette and Fearless had come near freezing.
Was he now about to undergo the same terrible fate?
The cold benumbed him.
Then as, no longer feeling pain, he turned over on his side with half-closed eyes, he murmured:
"I have fought beasts and men and come off victor. To this invisible enemy I must succumb. I think I am going to send in my chips."

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN Fearless went out of the room where Hunter was, he had to tear himself away, else in his present state of mind he felt that he could not avoid killing him.
He entirely forgot that Hunter, being left alone that terrible night in the room without fire, would be in danger of freezing to death.
Had he remembered that the generous young American would have instantly gone to his relief, and at risk to himself would have released him.
The four men did not go with Fearless far, but left him at the first corner.
Fearless did not feel the bitter weather.
He walked slowly along, thinking:
"How shall I find Manette?"
Suddenly he thought of Lola, and he cried out instantly:
"I will go to Lola's house. If any one can help me in this extremity, it is she."
Daylight in winter in Canada comes very late, and although it was now three o'clock in the morning, it still wanted full three hours of the break of day.
Fearless furiously rang the bell of Lola's house.
Lola was cautious.
On account of the conspiracy; in which she was one of the most active members in Quebec, she hardly dared answer a ring at that hour of the morning, and had instructed the servants to the same effect.
So persistent was the ringing of the bell, however, that she at last arose, donned a light wrap-

per, and going to the window, raised it a little and looked out.

The night was so dark that she could see nothing.

But as she listened she heard the voice of some one, seemingly in deep distress, murmur:

"Oh! why don't she come!"

She recognized the voice as that of Fearless.

In an instant she knew that something important must have happened, or he would not be there.

She could think of nothing except that he must be pursued.

Hastening to the door she opened it, saying:

"Quick—come in!"

She led him along the hall into the back parlor, and made a light.

Then she turned to him and said:

"What is it?"

The next instant the expression of his face startled her.

His eyes were bloodshot, there were hollows in his cheeks, and his face was pale.

She repeated, eagerly:

"For Heaven's sake, what's happened?"

He groaned:

"Manette!"

"What of her?"

"Captured. She has been concealed by the government spy."

"But how, when, where?"

She gave him a glass of wine, and little by little she got the whole story from this brave, bold, fearless man, who was usually so cool and confident, but who now, when Manette was torn from him, when he did not know whether she was dead or living, or where she was held captive, seemed to be as weak as any child.

Having heard the story, she said:

"Now let me think."

"Think hard, Lola—think for Manette and me."

"Hush!"

It was fully five minutes before she spoke again.

Then she said:

"She fell from her horse. Then she must have been hurt, and probably taken up insensible."

"Alas! I fear so."

The detective said he did not take her to prison. Then where did he take her?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out. Oh, Lola, solve it for me and I'll have her or I'll die."

"The question is, where would he be most apt to take a wounded girl for treatment, where a thorough examination would be necessary? I think I know."

Fearless sprang up with a cry of joy.

"Let's go right away. You'll see that I'll no longer be a weak child when I'm fighting for the liberty of the girl I love."

"Sit down. I must go alone."

"Alone?"

"Certainly. You can do nothing by force. You and Manette would both be arrested and obliged to give an account of yourselves at the police station. Then the whole story would not fail to come out. What would be the result? You would both be thrown into jail as conspirators against the government."

Fearless groaned and sat down.

Lola continued:

"I'll go and dress."

In a few moments she came down equipped for the street.

She said to Fearless:

"Will you wait until I come back?"

"I will wait."

Then Lola drew her heavy cloak around her and went out into the street.

The street lamps cast only a dim light, making the spaces between them seem all the darker.

But Lola walked quickly on, unheeding light or shade, in her search for Manette.

How was Manette?

When Hunter left the house and she was all alone with the doctor, the latter proceeded to examine into the extent of her injuries.

The doctor after awhile smiled, saying:

"There are no bones broken. She is insensible from shock, that's all. We'll soon remedy that."

She prepared the proper restoratives and applied them.

Manette soon opened her eyes.

She found herself in bed in a strange room, with a strange woman bending over her.

The female doctor said:

"How do you feel?"

"Stiff and sore. Where am I?"

"In my charge. I am a doctor, and will take good care of you."

"I must go."

"Impossible, my dear. You have had too much of a shock. You must stay here a few hours, at any rate."

Manette knew nothing of Hunter having taken her there. When he raised her from the sidewalk she was insensible, and had remained so. She asked the question how she came there.

The doctor replied:

"Never mind now. You'll know all to-morrow."

A troubled look came upon Manette's face. She was thinking of Frank Fearless, and wondering whether he escaped safely.

The doctor saw the look and said soothingly:

"All is right, my dear. Everything's all right."

"Did he escape?"

The doctor knew nothing of the man to whom the "he" referred, but he said:

"Yes, he's safe."

"And brought me here?"

"Drink this—drink this!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

MANETTE, believing now that Frank had brought her there, drank the liquid.

A few minutes thereafter she sank into a dreamless sleep.

The female doctor smiled as she looked at her.

"How beautiful she is," she said. "And what a noble face."

She sat by Manette a moment, feeling her pulse.

Then she said:

"She'll need no more watching to-night."

Turning down the gas, the doctor took a last look at Manette as she lay sleeping, and left the room.

She did not forget to lock the door, mindful of what she had promised Hunter, but she left the key on the outside, in the lock.

The lowered light cast flickering shadows around the room.

For about an hour Manette slept thus, like an infant, her breathing low and regular.

Then she became restless and uttered a moan or two.

She was dreaming of something evil.

She stirred and then awoke.

A hand was placed upon her arm. With a low cry she turned and looked.

No wonder she had dreamt of evil.

Her gaze fell on a terrible figure, holding a knife in one hand, kneeling beside the bed.

It was the dwarf she saw.

The dwarf from Montreal, with his monstrous head and horribly deformed body, who in the dim light fixed his glittering eyes upon her and whispered hoarsely:

"For your life not a word!"

And then he continued:

"I have come to save you."

Manette was still half stupefied by the drug the female doctor had given her to induce sleep, the effects of which had not yet passed off.

She murmured, dreamily:

"To save me!"

"Yes."

"From whom?"

"Your enemies, the troops and the detective. I am sent by one you love."

Instantly the half-breed girl became more wide-awake; her thoughts instantly reverted to Fearless. Had he sent the dwarf to take her away from there?

Had the misshapen being known what was passing in her mind he would undoubtedly have said Fearless sent him, but he had another story ready.

He said:

"Your father sent me."

"Is he in Quebec?"

"Yes. When he found you had left home he engaged my services, and we both came here. We have been hunting for you ever since. Read this."

He put a letter in her hand. Mechanically she took and glanced over it, reading as follows:

"Trust the dwarf. He is my confidential agent. Do whatever he says."

Manette said:

"It is my father's writing. How did you know that I was here?"

"I happened to see the detective bring you."

"The detective?"

"Certainly. Didn't you know it?"

"I was insensible when I came."

The dwarf said to himself:

"Good. That is all the better."

And he continued aloud:

"The detective is no other than Hunter, the terrible man who is on the track of the conspirators against the government. The woman in whose house you are is a female doctor. He brought you here to have your injuries looked into. In the morning—or as soon as it is daylight—he'll call here. Finding that you are not badly injured, he'll take you at once to jail."

Manette turned paler. The thought of prison was horrible to her.

She asked another question:

"Do you know who was with me?"

"Yes, the young American."

"Is he safe?"

"Yes, for the present."

The dwarf continued tragically:

"Do you see this knife? Well, I promised your father that I would go to you; and, if necessary, I intended to fight my way. Come, you have no time to lose. If you would escape you must go now."

"Where?"

"To your father."

"And Fearless—"

"Will be brought to you."

Manette did not in the least suspect the veracity of the dwarf.

He had certainly risked something in coming to her, and besides, he had the letter from her father.

The dwarf continued:

"I'll go outside while you dress. Be in a hurry, for we may be discovered at any moment."

He stepped outside into the hall and closed the door. Manette dressed quickly, and then opened the door, saying:

"I am ready."

The dwarf whispered:

"Come, then."

They went quietly down-stairs and passed out into the street, leaving the street door unlocked behind them.

At the corner, in the shadow, a carriage was waiting, the driver sitting on the box.

Manette entered.

As the dwarf was following, a woman closely muffled in a long cloak passed.

She gave a hurried glance and then went on.

She was Lola, on her errand for Frank Fearless, in quest of Manette.

The driver of the carriage seemed to already have his instructions, for the dwarf did not give him any.

They drove rapidly to a different quarter of the city, and stopped before a large stone house which seemed to be unoccupied.

The dwarf whispered to Manette:

"We have arrived. Your father waits."

He assisted her to alight, unlocked the door with a pass-key, and they entered the house.

The dwarf lighted a lamp and said:

"Come with me."

He led the way up-stairs, and knocked on a door on the third floor.

There was no response.

He said:

"Your father must be sleeping."

He opened the door and went in.

A dim light burned.

The dwarf turned it up and said:

"He isn't here. He must have gone out."

"At this hour?"

"He is very anxious and nervous. He has gone out into the street to walk it off. Would you mind staying here alone awhile?"

"Where are you going?"

The dwarf replied with another question:

"Do you know Lola?"

"Perhaps."

"Well, I am going there."

"For what?"

"To bring the young American to you."

"And my father—"

"Will be here before Fearless comes."

"Go, then, and return quickly."

The dwarf went out and closed the door.

He locked it softly behind him, although Manette did not know it.

Leaving the house, he gave instructions to the driver in a whisper and entered the carriage, which drove rapidly away in the darkness.

And as they went the hideous creature laughed and said:

"Now for the bloodhound, Hunter, for he is 'dead to rights.'"

The reader must be given to understand how it was that the dwarf came to be in Quebec and knew so much about the situation of affairs.

The miser was the cause of it.

He had an agent in Quebec who, the day after Fearless arrived there, telegraphed him the fact.

The miser was shocked.

He had supposed Fearless dead in the woodchopper's hut, and now he learned that he was alive and well.

The way he accounted for it was this:

He did not doubt his emissary whom he had commissioned and paid to put the young American out of the way.

He thought, however, that the rascal had done his work badly, and that Fearless had recovered consciousness after the fellow left him, and continued his journey.

Had Fearless recognized his assailant?

If so, he would be sure to make trouble when he returned to Montreal, and the ruffian who had been hired to kill him might be induced to "squeal."

This put the miser in a cold sweat.

He hurried at once to the room of the rascal, but did not find him in.

The man had not the slightest idea of being seen

by the miser, now that he had got his money, until his "pal"—as he supposed Hunter to be—returned.

On the door was a notice, dated that very morning, saying:

"Away on business. Back in a week."

A week! The miser dared not wait that long.

What might not happen in a week?

Ruin might come.

In this emergency the miser thought of the dwarf.

Hurrying to the house where, the reader will remember, Hunter had his struggle with the monstrosity, the miser found him in.

Without preface the miser said that the dwarf must at once go to Quebec.

The dwarf replied grimly:

"I'm comfortable here."

The miser said hastily:

"Your going may avert our ruin."

"Our ruin!"

"Yes, for if I fall you shall fall with me. Remember the safe robbery for which the young American is to suffer when the trial comes."

"You surely wouldn't—"

"But I would, though. You know Manette, the half-breed girl, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And her father employs you here."

"He does."

"He must trust you, then."

"If he didn't, he wouldn't hire me."

"Go to him and find out all you can. Then come back here."

After some persuasion and more threats the dwarf took his departure.

He went directly to the house of Mr. Levere, whom he found in great trouble on account of the disappearance of Manette.

The dwarf said hypocritically:

"What troubles you, master?"

"I can trust you, my friend?"

"With your life, master."

Mr. Levere, being accustomed to trust the dwarf, who had never yet deceived him, told him all, except the particular business on which Fearless had been sent.

That being a secret of the league, was not his to impart.

The dwarf said quickly:

"You cannot follow her, master, for the league requires your presence here. Let me go."

"You!"

"Yes; I can find her, and take care of her."

After some further conversation it was so arranged. But the dwarf said:

"Give me a writing that I can show to her, so that she will trust me."

Mr. Levere sat down and wrote the note which we have seen the dwarf show to Manette in the house of the female doctor.

It was arranged that the dwarf should start for Quebec that afternoon.

He returned and told the miser all.

The reply was:

"Good! it couldn't have happened better."

The miser then told the dwarf that he had an unoccupied furnished house in Quebec, which could be used by him during his stay there.

He was to follow next morning and stop at a hotel.

The dwarf was to communicate with him each day at least once, and oftener if necessary.

The rest of the instructions of the miser—which were terrible in their detail—the reader will understand by the actions of the dwarf, as the story progresses.

The dwarf, having arrived in Quebec, made cautious inquiries, and learned much.

He could not ascertain, however, where Fearless had gone when he left the city.

He roamed the streets much nights, and it was on one of these excursions that he saw the chase of the sleighs by the troopers and Hunter.

Keeping in the shadow, the dwarf saw all that was going on.

When Hunter took Manette to the house of the female doctor the dwarf followed, managing, by swift running, to keep in sight.

He thus discovered where the half-breed girl was taken.

He also followed the detective back, and when the troopers left him he knew that the detective had met with some foul play, or that he would surely have been at his post, as he said he would.

He now saw his chance to obtain possession of Manette, and acted upon it, as we have seen.

When the dwarf drove away from the house where he had left Manette, he went at once to a place within a block of where the detective was lying freezing, where he discharged the driver.

The remainder of the way he went on foot.

Entering the archway, he passed through it and went into the yard beyond, where the sleighs had been.

The dwarf now feared danger.

Whether the drivers and their companions had all left he did not know, and if he was caught prying around it might go hard with him.

But for the sake of revenge on Hunter he would have been willing to take even greater risks.

He tried the back door of the house and found it open.

The terrible being seemed entirely impervious to the cold, for, although the mercury was below zero, he took off his boots and stood in his stocking feet as if it was a summer night.

He crept softly up-stairs.

The house was large, rambling and unoccupied.

Room after room he went into.

He had come provided with a dark-lantern, and flashed its light in every one.

At last he opened the door where Hunter lay.

The first rays of the lantern flashed full across the body of the detective.

The dwarf uttered a cry of joy.

He threw the slide of the lantern wide open and drew his knife.

With a hideous grin upon his features he advanced to the detective.

Then he kicked him savagely, saying:

"Hallo, bloodhound!"

Hunter opened his eyes and murmured:

"Let me sleep!"

The dwarf comprehended.

He chuckled savagely, saying:

"Ho! ho! sleuth-hound! whose turn is it this time? Revenge is sweet!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE human fiend was not yet satisfied.

The sure death of his enemy was not enough.

He looked a moment and then said:

"It's too easy. Yes, it's too easy. I'll rouse him up, I'll warm him, and then I'll have the satisfaction of seeing him bear the *pain* of freezing."

He put on his boots and commenced kicking and beating the detective unmercifully.

Hunter was brought back to full consciousness, and was now thoroughly awake.

The dwarf kept up his beating, saying:

"Ho, ho! when they find ye, you'll be as black and blue as a whetstone."

Hunter recognized the dwarf.

He tugged once more at his bonds, but could not break them.

Finding it impossible, he lay quiet, looking in-

tently at the brute, and never wincing under the rain of kicks and blows.

The dwarf desisted, and said:

"How do you like it?"

Hunter said, in a peculiar voice:

"It's *your* turn now."

"Yes."

"*It'll be mine next time.*"

"Next time! Why, you fool, do you suppose I roused you from your sleep to let you go?"

"No."

"You're right; I didn't. I'm tough, and you can't freeze me."

"Beasts freeze hard."

"Do they? Well, I can afford to pocket an insult or two, now that you're in limbo. I'm going to sit down here and watch the grimaces you make while you undergo the pain of a second freezing, before you get to the sleeping part."

Hunter said nothing, for it would be useless to bandy words with the fellow.

The dwarf sat down on the floor.

Thus they were for half an hour.

Hunter had not made a motion.

The dwarf said:

"Well, how do you feel?"

"Very well. You've had your labor for your pains, you little monster. I'm not going to freeze."

The dwarf uttered a growl, saying:

"I'll cut your clothes off, and leave you here stark naked. That'll fetch you, bloodhound, and if it don't by daylight I'll knock you on the head."

He arose and bent over the detective, ready to cut his clothing off.

Hunter knew that if this was accomplished he would not live half an hour, chilled as he already was, in that terrible atmosphere.

The dwarf unbuttoned the detective's coats and vests and then suddenly paused.

Light footsteps were heard coming up the stairs.

The dwarf muttered a curse and closed the slide of his lantern.

Hunter gave the alarm.

Whether the comer was friend or foe, he could not be worse off than to be alone with the dwarf, which eventually would be certain death.

He called out:

"Hallo! This way!"

The dwarf put the point of his knife to the detective's throat and hissed:

"Another word and you die!"

The door opened.

The light of a lantern flashed into the room.

And in the doorway stood disclosed the figure of the young American, Frank Fearless.

The coming of Fearless was owing to a providential circumstance.

Some time after Lola left her house to go in search of Manette, leaving Fearless there, the fire burned low.

There was no coal at hand with which to replenish it. It went out.

The room became cold.

Fearless commenced to shiver.

His mind being filled with Manette, he had not thought of Hunter.

Now, however, his own chilly sensations brought Hunter back to him.

He remembered that the detective had been left alone, bound hand and foot, in the cold room in the deserted house, and the thought now for the first time came to him that the detective would freeze to death.

In a closet he found a lantern and lighted it.

Then he wrote a note to Lola, saying that he would soon return, and left it on the table.

This done, he hurried out of the house.

He was bound on a magnanimous errand.

He was going to try to save the life of a man who,

he believed, was the greatest enemy he and Manette had on earth.

A man who had hunted them like a bloodhound, who had compelled them to endure terrible hardship and almost suffer death, and who had stolen Manette and hidden her away, a prisoner.

But Fearless could not endure the thought that even this man should be left there to die.

Hurrying to the place, fearful that he might be too late, he passed through the archway, entered the house and went up-stairs to the room where Hunter had been left.

When the detective and the dwarf saw the young American standing in the doorway, they were actuated by different feelings.

Hunter thought:

"He has come for one of two reasons—either to save me from freezing to death, or to question me further about Manette. At any rate, it's not in him to let the dwarf do away with me if he can help it."

And, thinking of the dwarf's great strength, he continued:

"But *can* he help it?"

The dwarf thought:

"Another fish has come into my net. This is the man who is to be put out of the way. The detective can't help him. A surprise will do it."

Fearless stepped into the room.

The dwarf arose, and, assuming what he meant should be a smile of affability, said:

"You're just in time."

Fearless recognized the dwarf.

He had seen him at the door when he was initiated into the secret league, and knew he was the keeper of the house.

Having no suspicion, he therefore advanced toward the dwarf, saying:

"What are you doing here?"

The action of the young American would have been fatal to him, but Hunter cried out:

"Look out, Fearless! He means to murder you! He has a knife behind him!"

The dwarf uttered a howl of rage.

Out came his hand from behind his back, disclosing the knife.

With a bound like that of a lion he leaped toward Fearless and struck out, shouting:

"Yes! I mean to kill you both!"

Suddenly the fist of Fearless shot out. It struck the dwarf between the eyes, and knocked him against the wall. With a snarl he again sprung forward, but stopped midway; for, standing erect, with his right hand extended and a pistol in it, pointed at the dwarf's shaggy head, stood Fearless.

And he said, coolly:

"Checkmate!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE detective cried out heartily:

"Good for America!"

Fearless said sternly:

"Drop that knife! Hands up!"

The dwarf, gnashing his teeth, obeyed.

Fearless continued:

"Now, rascal, explain yourself!"

The dwarf said sullenly:

"I made a mistake."

The detective said:

"It's too thin. He knows you well enough, and it's my opinion he was sent here from Montreal on purpose to kill you."

"For what reason?"

"For what reason did they put the safe robbery on you? There's a wheel within a wheel in this business, as you'll find out, young man."

The detective continued:

"Who would you rather trust, that wretch or me?"

"You."

"Then cut these lashings, and we'll attend to that rascal. He knows *me*."

Fearless hesitated, and the detective continued:

"Frank Fearless, I have hunted you, but I fight fair. For the present let there be a truce between us."

Fearless hesitated no longer.

Keeping an eye on the dwarf, who still held his hands up, and having his pistol ready for use the instant it was required, he cut the cords that bound the detective's hands.

"That'll do," said Hunter. "I'll attend to the rest."

The dwarf was tied hand and foot, and laid on the floor in the same position Hunter had been in.

The detective surveyed him grimly, saying:

"What brought you from Montreal?"

"The cars."

"What's your business?"

"Pleasure."

"Which consists of murder, I suppose?"

"Not yet."

"But you hope it may?"

"I hope I'll kill you."

"You don't look much like it now."

Hunter turned to Fearless, saying:

"Come, we'll go."

"Are you going to leave this man here?"

"Certainly. *He* won't freeze, have no fear of that. Not but that it would be a good thing. Your friends will be around in an hour and attend to him."

Hunter and Fearless left the house, and the dwarf lay in the cold room gnashing his teeth with rage.

When they were outside, Hunter said:

"Fearless, I owe you my life."

"And in return you'll arrest me, I suppose?"

"God forbid! Do you think I'm worse than a brute, without gratitude? Look here! You've done me a good turn, and I'm going to do you one in return."

"What is it?"

"I'm going to take you to Manette."

Fearless uttered a cry of joy.

"And after that," continued Hunter, slowly, "I shall consider that we are quits. That is to say, when you take Manette away. I shall not hunt you again for twenty-four hours. I am aware that I shall not be doing my duty to the government, but— Well, a word to the wise is sufficient."

Telling him to follow, Hunter led the way to the house of the female doctor.

To his surprise the house was lighted.

Ring the bell they were instantly admitted and shown into the office, where sat the doctor and Lola.

Hunter saw that something was wrong, and asked:

"Where is Manette?"

"Gone."

"Didn't you lock her door?"

"Yes."

"Then she must have had help from the outside."

"Certainly."

"Tell me all you know."

That was little.

Lola had been the means of discovering the escape of Manette.

Surmising that the detective had brought the half-breed girl there for treatment, she had hastened there, and was surprised to find the door open.

She had gone stealthily up-stairs and into the room where Manette had been.

The doctor, coming to have a look at her patient, surprised her there.

Explanations followed, and it was found that Manette had left the house, having been assisted by some one from the outside.

Hunter said quickly:

"That dwarf knows something about this."

Fearless started up, exclaiming:

"I'll go and wring the secret from him."

"That won't do. Do you know where any of those men who captured me live?"

"Yes."

"Then go and tell one of them to release the dwarf right away. I'll 'shadow' him. You and I will declare a further truce, until twenty-four hours after Manette is found. I'll work to that end for all that I'm worth."

This was agreed to.

So, then, the current had once more turned, and the hunter and hunted were hunting together, both searching for Manette.

Lola and the doctor said:

"What can we do?"

"Keep your eyes about you. If you see a dwarf, no matter where, follow and see where he goes."

Lola and the doctor, having a plan of their own, remained to consult.

Fearless, when they were outside, said:

"After I have notified the men to release the dwarf, what shall I do?"

"Nothing, except wait for my report. Where shall I see you? You need have no fear. Remember, it's a truce until twenty-four hours after Manette is found. That will give you time to remove your quarters, and I won't follow you. But after that time war will again be declared, and I'll hunt you up."

"If you can find me."

Hunter smiled and said:

"Yes—if!"

They then separated. Fearless performed his part of the programme.

An hour later, the dwarf, free, and his teeth chattering with cold, came out of the archway in the gray dawn, and, muttering anathemas on everything, walked quickly down the street, swinging his long arms from side to side to keep them warm.

And as he went, a figure well disguised slipped out of a niche and followed, saying:

"Now, Sir Dwarf, we'll see who'll conquer, and I'll be a sleuth-bound on your track."

We left Manette in the room waiting for her father, after the dwarf went away.

The room was a large, old-fashioned one, plainly furnished, for the miser was too penurious to do otherwise, but neat and clean.

A bright fire was burning in the grate, and there was plenty of coal in the scuttle beside it.

Manette sat down before the fire and thought of her father and Frank.

She had, as yet, not the slightest suspicion that she had been entrapped.

An hour passed.

She wondered why it was that neither her father nor the dwarf came.

Feeling tired, she lay down upon the bed.

In a moment she was sleeping.

She awoke with a shock.

It was after sunrise, though how long she did not know.

She had been roused by the key turning in the lock and the door opening.

Thinking it was her father, she sprang up and saw—the miser!

Manette was speechless with surprise.

For once the half-breed girl could not find words.

The miser, master of the situation, smiled, and, locking the door, put the key in his pocket.

He advanced, saying:

"Good-morning, Manette."

Then she found words; the rich color mounted to her face as she cried out:

"Why are *you* here? Where is my father? How dare you come into this room?"

The miser chuckled:

"Three questions at once, my dear. But I'll try and answer 'em. I'm here because this is *my* house and *my* room. Your father is in Montreal. I dare come here because I want to talk to you."

Manette began to see the trap into which she had fallen. Her courage did not fail her. She cried out:

"I'll have nothing to say to you—begone!"

The miser laughed, saying:

"You want a little taming. They say kissing perforce is good for shrews; I'll try it."

The high-spirited girl did not wait for him to come.

Like a tigress the half-breed sprung upon him, all her mixed blood boiling.

For a moment it seemed as if the surprise and her impetuous rush would win.

Then the superior strength of the bony, muscular miser asserted itself. He held her firmly, and gradually brought his face close to hers.

"I'll tame you, vixen!" he hissed. "Before you're here long you'll do my bidding."

With a supreme effort she tore herself away from him, and dashed her little clinched hand full in his face.

He staggered back a moment; then, the mist clearing, he dashed forward, exclaiming:

"You shrew! You vixen! You half-breed! You've needed a taming all your life, and now I swear you'll get it!"

He stopped suddenly with a cry of horror.

Manette had thrown the window up, and was standing on the sill.

Her bosom heaved, and her eyes were like twin diamonds as she cried out:

"Monster! come one step nearer and I'll dash myself in pieces on the stones below!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE dwarf was shrewd.

Now that Hunter had escaped, he knew that he had an implacable enemy on his track.

If it was possible to avoid it, he did not intend to give Hunter a clew to the real business which had brought him from Montreal to Quebec.

He had intended to go directly back to the house where he left Manette, but the escape of the detective and Fearless caused a change in his plans.

The dwarf had too much sense to believe that Hunter would drop his trail.

Knowing that he would be "shadowed," he did not try to throw the follower off the track.

Instead of that he walked boldly to one of the hotels, registered and asked to be shown a room.

Having eaten his breakfast, he went upstairs.

Hunter walked to the desk, and, pointing to the dwarf's name, said:

"Do you know that man?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then he has been here before?"

"Once within the last year. It is impossible to forget such a man as that, you know."

"True. Is there a gentleman here from Montreal by the name of Ford?"

"No, sir."

The detective believed that Ford, the miser, was somewhere in the city, and that it was on his business that the dwarf had come.

He did not suspect the truth, that the deformed fellow had obtained Manette's father's consent to go in search of the half-breed girl.

He suspected, then, half the fact, but of the other half he was in complete ignorance.

He sat down in the hotel and waited.

The dwarf, when he went up-stairs, stayed in his room awhile, grumbling and growling.

He was cursing himself for not having instantly put the detective out of the way when he had a chance, instead of trying to prolong his misery, and thus losing all.

Had he killed Hunter he could undoubtedly have taken the life of Fearless, for if the detective had not warned the young American, the first blow of the knife in the deserted house would have told.

At a single *coup*, then, there would have been out of the way the two men whom he and the miser most feared.

This grand result had all been lost by his supreme foolishness, and he swore that if he ever got another chance the blow should be quick and sure.

After awhile the dwarf went to the door of his room, opened it a little and peered out into the corridor.

No one was in sight.

He slipped along the hall and knocked on the door of number 92.

The door was opened by the miser, who looked surprised, and said:

"Come in before you're seen."

He continued, when he had closed and locked the door:

"What brings you here against my express orders?"

"News."

"Of whom?"

"Manette."

"Ha! you've seen her?"

"Better than that. I have her."

"Where?"

"In your house, locked up in a room on the third floor."

The miser sprung to his feet with an exclamation of pleasure.

"Shut up," growled the dwarf, harshly. "Confound it! do you forget there's somebody in the next room?"

The miser sat down, saying:

"Success has come."

"Not yet. We're not out of the woods."

"What do you mean?"

"That bloodhound of a detective, Hunter, is in the city, and on my track. I have reason to believe he followed me here, and is now down-stairs."

The miser turned pale.

He feared the detective almost as much as he feared death.

He exclaimed, angrily:

"Fool! Why, then, did you come here?"

"For the good of yourself and me."

"I don't see that."

"Then it's you who are the fool. Suppose I had gone to the house, the detective would have followed and found the girl. Suppose I had gone to the place where I usually meet you, he would have followed and found *you*. Suppose I had gone to another hotel, I would then have been obliged to visit this place in search of you and he would have suspected."

"But you have come here—here, right where I am."

"And that was right. I came here and registered as any other traveler would do. He does not know you're here. Consequently I could make my report to you without danger of detection."

The miser could not fail to see the wisdom of the actions of the dwarf, who then told him all that had happened.

This increased his anxiety.

He said:

"You ought to have killed the bloodhound at once."

"I know it."

"If the detective is on the watch, how are we to get to Manette?"

"You must go."

"But Hunter will know me; he'll follow."

"I'll attend to that. There is an entrance leading out to the back street, without going through the office. You can slip out that way. I'll go down to the office and give him enough to do to watch me."

The dwarf showed the miser out by the rear entrance.

He then went to the office and, sitting down, commenced reading a newspaper.

But his small, ferret eyes took in all that was going on.

He thought by this means to baffle the Montreal detective by keeping him inactive while the miser did his work.

The latter took the most circuitous routes, avoiding the principal streets, and reaching the house, entered Manette's room, as we have seen.

When Manette sprung on the window-sill the miser was terribly alarmed.

Her death was not what he wanted.

Dead, she would be of no use to him; living, she might be much.

He exclaimed, quickly:

"Don't jump!"

He knew that the half-breed girl would keep her word.

When aroused, as she was now, she seemed to have absolutely no fear of consequences.

Penurious as he was, it would have taken a large sum of money to induce him to advance a step.

He continued, with a shudder:

"For Heaven's sake! leave the window!"

"Then *you* leave the room!"

"I'll not harm you."

"Leave the room! No; on second thoughts you may stay. I have some questions to ask. Go into the furthest corner over yonder."

The miser hesitated, but ultimately obeyed, his eyes glittering venomously.

Manette left the window-sill.

She stood close by, however, leaving the window open.

The girl looked scornfully at the miser, and said:

"Why did you bring me here?"

"I didn't."

"You hired the dwarf to do it?"

"Wrong again."

"Then why are you here?"

"Because this is my house."

"Yours?"

"Certainly. After a consultation with your father, I came to Quebec to assist in the search for you. Arriving this morning, I met the dwarf, who told me where you were. I sent him back to Montreal to report to your father that I would take care of you, and bring you back as soon as it can be done with safety."

He told this outrageous lie very glibly.

Manette replied:

"You're very solicitous for my welfare."

"Very."

"Why, then, did you insult me the moment you entered the room?"

"That was a joke."

"A queer one. I believe you are lying."

"Upon my soul, I am telling the truth."

Manette, who had recovered her calmness, said:

"Your story and the dwarf's don't agree. He said my father was in Quebec, and was to meet me here."

In his mind the miser cursed the dwarf as a blunderer, but said aloud:

"Your father expected to come, and be in this house last night. But at the last moment he found

that he couldn't get away, being unavoidably detained on business for the secret league. He telegraphed the dwarf that he would be here, but at the last moment I was sent in his place."

Although this story was plausible enough, Manette was not convinced. Had it not been for the insult the miser had offered her she might have believed it. Now, however, she put no trust in anything he said.

To try him further, she said:

"Well, I'll go now."

"Where?"

"To a friend's, where I'll be safe."

"I can't let you go."

"Why not?"

"Because the authorities have a description of you, and the city is alive with spies looking for you, led on by Hunter, the detective."

"Well, I'd rather be in his hands than yours. But never mind—Frank Fearless will find me, and your punishment will be heavy."

The face of the miser assumed a look of commiseration.

He said in a low voice:

"How can I tell her?"

"Tell me what?"

"The young American is dead."

"Oh, Heaven!"

Manette staggered back.

Then she cried out:

"Dead!—how did he die?"

"He was shot last night by the soldiers, while trying to escape with some sleighs."

"Shot dead?"

"Yes."

Manette sank down upon a chair. Her head drooped forward and her face was covered by her hands.

Not thinking, for the moment, of questioning the truth of the statement, she moaned:

"My noble Frank, my hero, my darling! Dead!"

The miser took advantage of the moment.

Like a cat he crept forward.

Then there was a spring, and his arms were clasped around Manette, as he cried out:

"Now, tigress, I have you!"

Instantly, at this fresh act of treachery, it flashed through the mind of Manette that the miser might have been lying about Frank.

The thought and the treachery fired her warm blood.

It gave her new strength.

She disdained to beg, but cried out:

"Not until I'm dead!"

It had been the intention of the miser to tie Manette, which, in her half-fainting condition on account of the news of Fearless, he thought would be easy to do.

But he reckoned wrong.

Manette struggled with double her previous strength.

Round the room they went, the miser panting, the half-breed girl, all her wild blood aroused, struggling with set teeth.

Suddenly, with a violent effort, the miser flung her against the center-table.

Manette gasped. Her side was hurt.

A heavy paper-weight was on the table.

As a last resource Manette grasped it and brought it down, with all her strength, upon his head.

The miser fell. He lay upon his back, motionless.

Manette dropped the paper-weight.

She quivered and trembled.

Then, with a gasp, she said:

"Have I killed him?"

The pallor of his face resembled death.

Brutal as he had been to her, Manette did not wish to have his death upon her mind.

She loosened his neckcloth and did all she could to bring him back to consciousness.

He gasped, and his eyelids trembled.

Manette smiled, saying:

"He is not dead."

Taking her handkerchief, she turned him on his face and tied his hands behind his back.

Five minutes afterward, he said:

"My head aches."

Manette said, quietly:

"I should think so."

"My hands are tied."

"Of course. Now, rascal, I want you to tell me the truth. See! this is the paper-weight which struck you down. With it I can crush your skull."

The miser believed the half-breed girl capable of killing him out of revenge.

Fearful of death, he gasped:

"You won't kill me!"

"That depends. If you lie, look out. Now answer me truly. Is Frank Fearless dead?"

"No."

"Is he a prisoner?"

"No."

"Why did you tell me so?"

"To surprise you."

"So that you could seize me unaware?"

"Yes."

"Did my father send the dwarf here?"

"He did."

"Why do you wish to get me in your power?"

"Because I love you and wish to marry you."

Manette shrugged her shoulders, saying:

"Pshaw! You love nothing but yourself and money. There is some other reason. What is it?"

The miser hesitated.

Then he said:

"There is no other reason."

"I don't believe you. Come, get up."

"I can't; my hands are tied. I'm not so young as I once was."

"I'll help you."

With her assistance he arose, and Manette seated him by the fire, saying:

"You told me that spies were searching for me throughout the city. Is that true?"

"It is, so help me Heaven! And Hunter, the detective, is leaving nothing undone to find you. If you go out in the street in daylight you'll be arrested."

"Then I'll stay until night."

As a precaution, Manette took the handkerchief of the miser from his pocket and tied his feet together.

Then she took the key that opened the bedroom door.

This done she sat down, after replenishing the fire and shutting down the window.

Not a word did she say to the miser, who several times tried to open conversation, but Manette would not speak.

Thus it continued until dark, when the half-breed girl arose, saying:

"I hope you'll have a pleasant time here alone."

"You won't leave me tied?"

"Oh, yes, I will."

Manette, still dressed in the boy's clothing, buttoned the overcoat closely around her, and unlocking the door, stepped out into the hall.

As her foot touched the first step of the stairway she started and turned back.

The hall-door had opened, and was slammed with a loud bang.

Then a voice said:

"She's here all right. We'll go to her."

It was the voice of the dwarf.

Manette felt her heart beat faster.

What new danger threatened? There were now two of them.

How could she escape?

Was she just too late?

She crouched down at the head of the stairs and said firmly:

"Though there were more than two, I'll fight for freedom!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

FEARLESS was almost wild with anxiety about the girl he loved.

Manette was gone.

Hunter, the great detective, was at fault, and the young American thought, what chance would he have to find the half-breed girl when the detective had lost the trail.

It was no discredit to Frank Fearless that, in the present strait, he for the moment lost sight of the secret league of patriots, and thought only of his darling, for whom he would have given his life—Manette.

After he had gone to the secret place where the drivers of the sleighs stayed, and told the man who last left the dwarf to release him, according to Hunter's instructions, he went out into the street again with an aching head and swelling heart.

Where to go to look for Manette he did not know.

The detective had told him little, seemingly confident of finding the girl unaided.

There had been a truce declared of twenty-four hours after finding Manette.

Fearless trusted in Hunter's word, and had no fear that he would be molested by him.

But the soldiers! The sergeant and his men had seen him and knew him.

He had no truce with them.

So he was handicapped.

He was hunting and being hunted.

He was searching for his darling, and being searched for by the soldiers, the sergeant, and the civil and military authorities of Quebec.

For the remainder of the night, however, and until a late hour of the day he had little fear.

The soldiers, weary, would sleep late, and he could walk the streets unmolested.

Now that his work was done in Quebec, nothing would have been easier than for him to take the train to Montreal; but that would have been to leave Manette.

Leave Manette? Never!

Sooner would he have suffered all the torments imaginable than to leave deserted the girl he loved in this—as he believed—the hour of her greatest peril.

Until sunrise he wandered about the streets, and then an idea suddenly occurred to him.

What if it had been a friend of Manette who took her from the house of the female doctor?

Where, then, would Manette have been most likely to go?

Clearly to one of two places.

Either to the house of the stationer or to that of Lola.

Acting on this supposition, Fearless, went first to the house of the stationer, and, of course, received no information of Manette.

Leaving there hurriedly, he hastened to the house of Lola, who had just come in.

She received him in the library, and said:

"What news?"

"None."

Lola sighed, and said:

"The doctor and I have been putting our heads together, woman-like, and think we have a plan which promises success, though it may fail."

"What is it?"

"That is our secret. You work your own way, and we'll work ours. We must succeed, especially

as the detective has declared a truce, and is helping us in this."

She made Frank, when breakfast was ready, sit down and make a show of eating.

After that, Fearless became more restless still.

At last, toward the middle of the afternoon, he declared that he could endure it no longer, and that he would go out upon the street.

Lola represented to him that he would be recognized, but Fearless would not listen.

As a last resource, Lola showed him a room where there were plenty of changes of clothing and disguises, used by the patriots, and told him to assume a disguise so that he would not be known.

The young American did so.

But he was not an adept at the art.

About three o'clock he went out into the street, and, sauntering around the city, happened to pass the hotel where the detective was keeping watch over the dwarf.

Hunter was standing by the door.

He went out and touched Fearless on the shoulder, saying:

"Wait a minute."

"Who are you?"

"Hunter, the detective."

"And Manette?"

"I haven't found her yet, but I've located the dwarf."

"Where is he?"

"Here. I wish to go out awhile. You must stay here and watch the dwarf, who is up-stairs in his room, I suppose. If he leaves the hotel you must follow him. Your disguise is flimsy, but perhaps he'll not know you. When he leaves here he will probably go to Manette. Follow him and you will find her."

"Where shall I stay—here or in the office?"

"In the office."

Hunter walked away.

He had several things to do in connection with the case, which would not interest the reader until the results are shown.

By the time he had completed these it was growing dark.

Hunter intended to return to the hotel and relieve Fearless, but was prevented.

On the way he recognized a man who was walking along the street.

The man was one of the drivers of the sleighs.

An idea occurred to Hunter.

He said to himself:

"Fearless has not been to see the drivers since he told them to release the dwarf. It may be that one of them had a hand in taking her from the doctor's house. If so, she's with them. At any rate, I'll follow the driver. It can do no harm. If it doesn't lead to Manette, it may tell me where the sleighs and arms disappeared to in such an unaccountable way."

He "shadowed" the driver to Lola's house.

The man remained there but a few minutes, and then, coming out, sauntered down the street.

The detective had no difficulty in keeping him in sight, skulking along in the shadows of the houses so that he would not be seen.

The driver approached an old house, and, going up the steps, rang the bell.

He was obliged to wait awhile.

Hunter improved the opportunity by gliding up noiselessly along in the shadow until he crouched by the side of the steps.

Presently a slide in the door opened, and a voice said:

"Who's there?"

"Arms."

The door was opened and the man admitted.

The detective said to himself:

"H'm! Mr. Driver, although you may not have

taken me to Manette, I think you've led me to the secret arsenal of the conspirators against the government."

Hunter hesitated a moment.

He made up his mind to play a bold game.

He would enter the house alone, and, if satisfied that the arms were there, would solicit the aid of the police and raid the premises.

Waiting a few minutes, he walked up the steps of the house and rang the bell.

He was not compelled to wait as long as the driver had done before him, for the slide in the door was almost instantly opened, and a voice asked, as it had done to the driver:

"Who's there?"

As the driver had replied, Hunter answered:

"Arms."

The bolts were withdrawn on the inside, but the door was not opened.

After waiting awhile, Hunter turned the knob.

The door opened; he stepped inside.

No one was there. A dim light was burning inside, and he was alone.

This was unexpected by the detective.

He had thought that, of course, some one would meet him on the inside and question him further.

In spite of the peril in which he undoubtedly was placed, he smiled to himself as he stood there.

The situation seemed ridiculous.

Where should he go to begin his search?

He was undoubtedly in the house where the arms were, but he might run, at any moment, into danger which would be his death.

Should he retreat? No; he was there, and before he raided the house with the police or soldiers, he would know to a certainty that what he was looking for was in the house.

To raid the place and find nothing contraband, would be to make himself the laughing-stock of the Quebec detectives.

He moved along the hall.

Opposite the head of the stairs that led down into the basement was a door, and through this door he heard the murmured sound of voices.

The detective put his ear to the keyhole and listened.

He heard these words, which alone well repaid him for the risk he ran:

"The last load of arms is here."

"Yes, thanks to the young American."

"Where will the first blow be struck?"

"Here, in Quebec; the forts will all be seized, and they are the strongest in Canada."

"The telegraph lines——"

"Will be cut."

"And the railroad between here and Montreal——"

"Will be torn up. The Canadian troops, if they march at all, will be slow coming. I don't believe, though, that the Canadian troops will fight against us."

"Nor I."

The last speaker continued:

"Have you had word from Montreal?"

"Yes, to-day, from Levere, the chief."

"And the final blow is to be struck——"

"One week from to-night."

"Good," said Hunter to himself. "It's a pity to spoil your little game, my patriots, and I almost wish I was with you; but it must be done, and——"

A hand touched his shoulder.

Turning, he saw that he was confronted by two women, who had come up the basement stairs.

One was Lola, and the other, somewhat older, he did not know.

Both had pistols pointed at his heart.

Lola's eyes flashed.

She whispered:

"Is this your truce of twenty-four hours? I

thought you were to hunt for Manette. Treacherous bloodhound, it will be a service to my country to kill you where you stand!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

FEARLESS, being left by Hunter, went into the hotel office and sat down to wait and watch.

He had, of course, no idea that the dwarf knew he was there, but was mistaken.

When Fearless and the detective had their conversation on the sidewalk, the dwarf was looking from his window and saw them both.

The dwarf, whose eyes were sharp as steel traps, recognized both Fearless and Hunter through their disguises.

He laughed when Hunter walked away, and, rubbing his hands together, said:

"The sleuthhound's gone. He is the only one I fear. I'll come it over that Yankee so slick that he will never know what hurt him until he's down. Now that Hunter's out of the way, it's my time to get out of here for good and 'do' for the American."

Putting on his hat and overcoat, the dwarf went down into the office.

Going to the clerk, he paid his bill, and said, in a voice loud enough for Fearless to hear:

"I'm going out, and as I may not be back again I'd better settle."

He then lighted a cigar and looked around.

Fearless was seated on one of the chairs in the corridor leading to the street.

The dwarf sauntered that way, and dropped into a seat beside him, saying:

"These are troublous times, sir."

"In what way?"

"Well, about the Riel business. The French and half-breeds still continue their agitation, and it is said that there are indications of an insurrection. Might I ask which side you're on, sir?"

"Neither."

"Every Canadian should be."

"Perhaps."

"I'll tell you," said the dwarf confidentially, "if you're thinking of going on either side, you'd better hang fast to the side of the government."

"Why so?"

"Because it's the strongest."

"H'm."

"Perhaps you don't believe it?"

"I have nothing to say."

The dwarf laughed and said:

"That's right; don't give yourself away."

"What do you mean?"

"That you're a secret enemy of the government, and the authorities are looking for you now."

Fearless started and said nothing.

The dwarf continued:

"Be a little careful. I don't mind telling you I'm in sympathy with the patriots myself, but that's no reason why a man should put a halter around his neck."

Then, apparently anxious to be agreeable, he continued:

"Have a cigar?"

"No, thank you."

The dwarf smoked a few minutes longer in silence.

Then he arose and said:

"I must be going."

He went out of the hotel without looking behind him, well knowing that Fearless would follow.

The young American waited until the dwarf was outside the door, and then he, too, sauntered out.

The dwarf was half a block away, walking leisurely.

Fearless, keeping as much as possible in the shadows and out of the way of the street lamps,

followed several blocks until the dwarf went up the steps of a house and stood a moment.

Fearless walked hastily up.

He caught the dwarf by the arm, saying:

"I'll go in with you."

The dwarf, apparently surprised, although this was exactly what he had been planning for, said:

"I guess not."

"I guess so! No nonsense, dwarf. I'm armed, and won't hesitate to use them. Open that door. Manette is in that house and I wish to see her."

"Manette! You know?"

"Yes, I know. There is a policeman. Shall I call him?"

"No; for Heaven's sake!"

"Then open the door!"

The dwarf, apparently overcome with fear, placed his key in the lock, opened the door, and said:

"Come in."

And he continued, when inside the hall:

"You needn't keep that pistol pointed at my head. *She's here all right. We'll go to her.*"

"In what part of the house is she?"

"In the cellar."

"Heavens! Wretch, lead on!"

The dwarf, bearing the hall lamp, led the way down into the cellar, but on the way, unseen by Fearless, he pressed a knob in the wall.

He threw open the door of the cellar, after fumbling fully a minute at the bolt.

Then he said:

"Here she is."

They stepped into the cellar.

Crash! The butt of a pistol, wielded by an unseen hand, fell on Fearless' head.

He fell with a groan.

A man sprang into the cellar.

"Oho!" he cried out. "How was that done, dwarf?"

The dwarf danced around and shouted:

"Good enough. Give him the finishing touch. Blow the dog's brains out."

The man put the pistol to Fearless' head.

"Hold!"

They looked up, startled.

Manette was standing in the cellar doorway.

She saw her lover lying stark and stiff on the cold stones of the floor.

She uttered a shriek of horror.

Then, unarmed as she was, the half-breed girl threw herself upon the two assassins, crying out:

"Murderers! wretches! fiends! I'll save my love or die with him!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE suddenness of Manette's attack took the dwarf and his companion by surprise.

The man dropped his pistol as he started back.

As the half-breed girl perceived it, even in the act of springing upon the would-be murderer of Fearless, she snatched it up and leveled it, crying out:

"Not a movement, or I'll fire!"

The dwarf, recovering himself, cried out to his assistant:

"She don't know how to shoot. Seize her!"

Manette said, firmly:

"Stand back!"

The man uttered a derisive cry.

He leaped toward her.

The pistol cracked. The fellow fell upon the cellar floor and lay howling, with a bullet in his shoulder.

Manette, turning to the dwarf, said quickly:

"It's your turn next!"

She pointed the pistol at him.

The dwarf trembled.

He had seen the accuracy of her aim, and feared the pistol.

In spite of the miser's edict that the half-breed girl must not be harmed, the dwarf would now have done her an injury had he possessed the power.

He was fearful for his life, being of the opinion that Manette was about to fire at him.

Not daring to put his hand in his pocket to draw his revolver, he exclaimed:

"Don't kill me!"

"You killed Frank Fearless."

"I never touched him."

"Then you ordered it."

"He isn't dead."

"Not dead?"

"No, he's only stunned. Look! he's stirring."

Manette did not look.

She was fearful of treachery, and never took her eyes off the dwarf.

But her heart was bursting with anxiety to know if his words were true.

A groan from Fearless reassured her.

She said to herself:

"Thank God!"

She glanced around at him like a flash: but in a second, before the dwarf could improve the opportunity, her eyes were on him again.

The dwarf growled:

"You have no occasion to shoot me, because you see he ain't dead."

"It isn't your fault."

"I didn't intend to kill him."

Then what was that man doing with the pistol at his head?"

The dwarf replied:

"He was going to murder him, but I prevented it."

The wounded man, who heard the statement, ceased his groaning, and said:

"He lies. He told me to shoot the man. I was hired by him to remain concealed in the house and be on hand in case I was wanted. When he came through the hall he touched a button which moved a bell in the secret room where I was concealed. While he was making believe he couldn't unfasten the bolt of the cellar-door, I crept behind them in my stocking feet. When the man who lies there stepped into the cellar I struck him on the head with the butt of my pistol."

"Brute!"

"Yes, I was a brute; but that monstrosity there is worse. When the man was down the dwarf told me to blow his brains out."

The dwarf exclaimed:

"Liar!"

"It's the truth."

At that moment Fearless murmured:

"Manette!"

The heart of the half-breed girl thrilled with joy. She could not turn to look at him.

In a low voice she said:

"Frank, can you get up?"

"I think so."

"Try to come to me."

He arose with difficulty and staggered toward her, for his head was dizzy.

She handed him the pistol, saying:

"Is your hand steady enough to shoot straight?"

"Yes."

"Take this pistol, then, and on the first sign of treachery from the dwarf, shoot him."

Fearless replied grimly:

"I ought to shoot him now. It will benefit the world to put the monster out of it."

"It would be murder, Frank, now that the man is at our mercy."

"Have it your own way, Manette."

There were, on the floor of the cellar, some pieces

of rope which had, perhaps, been used to tie some poor unfortunate who had been decoyed there.

Taking them, Manette said to the dwarf:

"Put your hands together."

"What for?"

"You'll find out. Frank, be ready to shoot."

Frightened by the last words, the dwarf did as he was ordered, and his hands were tied.

Then his ankles were secured the same way, and he was stretched out on the floor.

His teeth were grating together with a rasping sound, but he dared make no open protest.

Manette then turned to the wounded man, saying:

"Is your wound painful?"

"Yes, it hurts me."

"Well, I won't tie you."

The fellow replied gratefully:

"Thank you."

And he continued humbly:

"Look here! this is the first crime of that kind I ever attempted."

"Let it be your last."

Manette and Fearless left the cellar, bolting the door. When they were outside, the young American said:

"What is to be done with those fellows?"

"Leave them there. The cellar is so far underground that they won't freeze to death."

"No; but they'll starve."

Manette reflected, and then said:

"They must be arrested for trying to murder you."

"That won't do."

"Why not?"

"We would have to appear in court against them. That would never do, for we would immediately be identified and arrested."

"What shall be done, then?"

"We'll think of it. But, Manette, how came you in the cellar?"

"I wasn't in the cellar."

Mutual explanations followed.

The reader has already been informed of the preceding movements of Fearless, and also of those of Manette up to the time when she was left crouching down behind the banisters at the head of the stairs.

When Fearless spoke, in reply to the dwarf, at that time, she recognized the voice.

At first she supposed they were coming up the stairs to her; but when they went in the contrary direction, toward the cellar, Manette became alarmed.

She feared that the dwarf meant treachery to Frank, and determined to warn him if she could.

Going down-stairs softly, she saw the man who struck Frank come out from his hiding-place and walk stealthily toward the cellar.

Manette followed him.

She arrived just in time to prevent her lover's murder, as we already know.

These events having been related, Fearless began to grow weak and dizzy again.

Manette said quickly:

"Sit down on the steps, Frank, there's wine in the room up-stairs. I'll go and bring it."

When she reached the room the miser was still bound hand and foot, as she had left him.

He said as she entered:

"Ah! Manette, I knew you couldn't find it in your heart.

"Couldn't find what in my heart?"

"To leave me here."

"I intend to do just that."

"To leave me?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you come back?"

"After the wine. And I'll give you some infor-

mation while I am here. That dwarf of yours is locked safely in the cellar."

"The dwarf?"

"I said so."

The miser turned pale and gasped.

"Who did it?"

"I! You said he had left here for Montreal. You lied! Mr. Ford, your course of wickedness and intrigue is almost ruin."

Leaving the miser in a cold sweat of apprehension for fear the dwarf had, or would, confess, to shield himself, Manette went down-stairs and gave Fearless the wine.

The generous fluid put new life in him.

He arose, saying:

"Now I am strong again."

"And ready to go?"

"Yes."

"Where shall we go for safety?"

"I think we had better go to the stationer's. If we can reach there without being detected, he'll manage to conceal us, if any man can."

They left the house together, and started on their perilous way to the house of the patriot stationer.

The dwarf, being left bound hand and foot in the cellar, believed that he would be sent for by the authorities.

It was now his desire to escape, and, realizing that the game was up, make his way across the border into the United States.

He called to the wounded man:

"Stop that infernal groaning and listen to me."

"What do you want?"

"Come here and untie me."

"I'll see you — first."

"You won't?"

"No. You've got me into this scrape, and I can't escape, wounded as I am, even if I get out of here. You've got to suffer with me. We'll both 'go up' together."

The dwarf tried threats, but they were only sneered at by the wounded man, who said:

"You look like hurting somebody, with your hands and feet tied."

The dwarf then tried the effects of coaxing, but without avail, the wounded man saying:

"Here you stay until you're taken out by officers. And that's all there is about it."

Cursing his companion for a fool, the dwarf, his sharp eyes having become accustomed to the darkness of the cellar, looked around.

Within a few feet of him was a heap of rubbish, and on it was an old and rusty auger.

The dwarf uttered a cry of joy, but suddenly changed it to a curse, saying:

"There is the means of escape, but how am I to use it with my hands tied?"

He thought awhile and suddenly exclaimed:

"What a fool I am!"

Manette had not thought to tie his hands behind his back. She had only bound the wrists together in front of him.

Nothing was easier than for the monstrosity to raise his wrists to his mouth and untie the knot with his teeth.

This he accomplished quickly.

His hands being free, he released his feet and stood up, saying to the wounded man:

"Now, my joker, you see I didn't need your help after all. If you had given it to me I would have taken you out of here and assisted you to escape. As it is, you can lie there and rot, or be captured by the officers, for all I care. In a short time I'll be in safety."

The wounded man glared fiercely, but said nothing.

The dwarf went to the pile of rubbish, took the

auger, and calculating the distance the bolt was above the floor, bored a hole through the door.

This he enlarged with the large blade of his knife until he could put his hand through.

He was reaching outside for the bolt, when a pistol cracked and a bullet whistled past his head, burying itself in the door.

The wounded man had crept stealthily to where his pistol had fallen when he was shot by Manette, and fired with intent to kill.

The dwarf uttered a cry of rage.

Leaping forward, he seized the wounded man in his powerful arms and hurled him across the cellar, crying out:

"Confound you! that'll do for you!"

The man struck the wall of the cellar and fell to the floor, where he lay insensible, the blood oozing from his mouth.

The dwarf looked at him a moment, and then said:

"You're fixed."

Returning to the door he opened it and stepped out into the passage.

His intention was to leave the house and Quebec as quickly as possible; but as he was about to open the street door, he thought of the miser.

He said to himself:

"I wonder if he's up-stairs yet. If he is, now's the time to get my money, before I leave the country."

Hurrying up-stairs, he entered the room in which Manette had been imprisoned.

The miser was still there, bound.

He uttered an exclamation of pleasure as the dwarf entered, and said:

"Untie me."

The dwarf replied quietly:

"So you're in limbo."

"Yes, yes—let me loose."

"We'll transact a little business first. How about that money you owe me?"

"I'll pay it. I can't do it while I'm tied up this way."

"That's so. Will you settle if I'll untie you?"

"Yes."

The dwarf cut the cords, and the miser sprang to his feet, exclaiming:

"Free again! This place is getting too hot to hold me. I'm going."

He started toward the door.

The dwarf caught his arm, saying:

"You've forgotten something."

The miser looked about the room, and said:

"What is it?"

"You've forgotten to pay me my money."

"What money?"

The dwarf exclaimed angrily:

"The money you owe me."

"I owe you nothing."

"Didn't you promise to pay me for coming here and getting possession of Manette?"

"She escaped."

"Whose fault was that? She was safe enough when I left her. If you hadn't let her get away, Fearless would have been dead now."

The miser replied coolly:

"Well, it failed."

"And you're not going to pay me?"

"Not a cent. You can be of no more use to me, and I don't care to waste my money on you."

The face of the dwarf became fearful to look at. It was hideous and distorted. His eyes were like balls of fire as he cried out:

"Miser, think well what you're doing."

"I have thought. Come, my good fellow, stand aside, for I'm going out."

He did not fear that the dwarf would proceed to extremities.

He thought the monstrosity would bluster and grumble, and that would be all.

Once more he moved toward the door.

And once more the dwarf caught him, saying:

"I want my money."

"I don't owe you any."

"And you'll give me none?"

"Not a cent."

"Then, by Heaven! I'll kill you and take all you've got!"

As he spoke, the dwarf caught the miser and the struggle began.

Ford, realizing for the first time that his life was in danger, gasped:

"Let up—I'll pay!"

The dwarf, frenzied with rage, cried out:

"I'll have it *all* now, and your life with it!"

He hurled him across the room.

The head of the miser struck the corner of the marble mantel with terrific force.

He groaned and fell to his knees, clutching at the air for support.

The dwarf sprang upon him.

He bore him down upon his back and clutched his throat with both powerful hands.

And as he choked the miser, the fiend snarled out:

"Your life first, your money next, and then for liberty across the line!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HUNTER had been taken by surprise by Lola.

But, trained as the detective was, he did not betray it in the least.

He turned and said quietly:

"Good-evening, Lola. I did not anticipate this pleasure."

Lola exclaimed passionately:

"Did you hear what I said?"

"I believe you said something about killing me."

"I did. Why shouldn't I kill you?"

"Why should you?"

"You said you would declare a truce until Manette was found, and twenty-four hours thereafter."

"I have kept it."

"Then why are you here?"

"Searching for Manette. The truce meant that neither you, Fearless, nor Manette would be arrested until twenty-four hours after she is found."

"Still you come here to arrest me?"

"You are mistaken. I didn't know you were here."

"Why, did you think Manette was here?"

"I followed one of the drivers, thinking she might have come here when she escaped from the house of the female doctor. Is Manette here?"

"No."

"Then I had better be going and search elsewhere."

"Wait. If you go toward that door, Mr. Hunter, I shall shoot you."

The detective shrugged his shoulders, saying:

"In that case I had better not move."

This conversation had been carried on in such low tones that it was not audible to the persons in the next room. Lola now said:

"Come with me down in the basement."

When they were there, she continued:

"Did you follow the driver for the sole purpose of finding Manette?"

"Yes."

"What did you overhear when you were listening at the door up-stairs?"

"Very little."

Which was true, but that little was of great importance.

"Have you any clew to Manette?"

"At present—no."

Lola sighed, and appeared to reflect; for the moment she was off her guard. The detective took advantage of her absence of mind.

Both women were standing within reach of him.

The pistol of each was held loosely.

Shooting both hands out quickly the detective grasped the pistols and pulled them away.

Then he said:

"Make no noise, now. You'll not be harmed or arrested. I wish a moment's conversation with you before I leave the house."

Speechless with astonishment at being so adroitly deprived of their weapons, the two women looked at each other and said nothing.

The detective continued:

"Lola, I told you the truth when I said I came here in the hope of finding Manette, but I now tell you I discovered something else."

"What is it?"

"That the arms and ammunition of the conspirators are concealed in this house."

"Ah!"

"That the first blow is to be struck in Quebec against the forts."

"Heavens!"

"And that the insurrection is to commence one week from to-night."

Lola sank down in a chair, murmuring:

"All's lost!"

After a moment she continued:

"How did you find out?"

"No matter. It is enough that I know. Now, listen while I say something of importance to you."

"I am listening."

"In the first place I declared a truce."

"You did."

"And I shall keep it. But you know that it is my duty to capture those arms."

"I suppose so."

"That will be done within the hour by a detachment of police or soldiers. There will not be time for you to remove them, and you will, of course, see the folly of resistance."

Lola made no reply except a sigh.

The detective continued:

"You had better go at once from here to your own house. I will be there in the course of a few hours. In the meantime, I have other work to do. My visit will be friendly, and you need have no fear. Do you consent to this?"

"I have no alternative."

"Very well, then."

Hunter left the house.

He went at once to the barracks, obtained a squad of soldiers, and returned to the house.

Entering, they found the place deserted.

The arms and ammunition were found in the sub-cellar, and there were enough to completely arm and equip an army of five thousand men.

Had the patriots been given a chance to use them, and taken the garrisons by surprise, Quebec would certainly have fallen.

Leaving a detachment to guard the property, the detective went out into the street.

He was proceeding toward Lola's house, when he encountered Fearless and Manette.

The detective was surprised into an exclamation of pleasure.

"Manette!" he exclaimed.

Manette drew back, but Fearless said:

"Do you intend to arrest us?"

"You forget there is a truce of twenty-four hours."

"Do you intend to observe it?"

"Certainly. Where are you going?"

Fearless hesitated.

He did not like to say that they were going to the stationer's, for fear of getting that patriot into trouble.

Perceiving his hesitation, Hunter continued:

"You had better go to Lola's house. And for fear that you will be arrested on the street, I'll go with you."

On the way Fearless told the detective of the condition in which he had left the dwarf, the wounded man, and the miser.

"Good," said Hunter. "I'll pay 'em a visit. The fear of arrest may induce them to unravel the other little mystery connected with this case. I mean the mystery of the safe robbery."

At the door of Lola's house he left them, saying:

"Be ready to admit me when I come. Have no fear. I give you my word of honor that I will observe the truce."

The detective left them, and hurried to the house where Manette had been imprisoned.

Opening the door with a skeleton-key, he went directly to the cellar, the door of which he was surprised to find open.

Striking a light, he saw the wounded man lying on the floor of the cellar, by the wall against which the dwarf had thrown him.

Entering, he said:

"Well, how do you find yourself?"

The man replied, with a groan:

"The dwarf has 'fixed' me."

"Where is he?"

"He escaped a few minutes ago."

"Do you know where he went?"

"No. Oh! what pain."

Hunter lifted the man in his arms, and carried him up to the first floor.

The man groaned dismally, and as he was put down on the carpet, gasped and was dead.

The detective, looking at him, said:

"No more information can be obtained from him. I'll go up-stairs and see if the dwarf thought enough of the miser to release him. If so, I'll have to search elsewhere, for they must be captured."

He went up-stairs, and into the room which Manette had described to him as the one in which she had been imprisoned.

And there a thrilling sight met his gaze.

On the floor lay the miser, and over him, with both hands clutching the fallen man's throat, was the dwarf, snarling like a rabid dog.

Like a flash, Hunter leaped forward.

He caught the dwarf by the throat, and hurled him backward, exclaiming:

"Thug! is this another murder?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE dwarf was hurled to the other side of the room.

In an instant Hunter was upon him, and passed his handkerchief around his wrists and tied them.

Then he went to the miser, who was gasping.

Hunter raised him up, and poured some brandy from his flask between his lips.

Ford revived a little and gasped:

"You're the detective!"

"Yes."

"Where's the infernal dwarf?"

"Yonder, with his hands tied."

The miser whispered, that being as loud as he could speak:

"He's murdered me. Hang him!"

"You're not dead yet."

"I soon shall be. My head struck the corner of the mantel. I want to tell you something about Manette."

"What is it?"

"Her mother's sister left home twenty years ago.

They thought her dead. She is dead now. She was married, and her husband left her an immense fortune. Manette and Henri are the heirs. Her name was Mary Lecraft. That's why I wanted to marry Manette."

A deadly paleness overspread his face.

He gasped again.

Hunter gave him some more brandy.

He then continued:

"The dwarf robbed the safe."

"Ha!"

"I hired him. I was jealous of Fearless. I sneaked in and put some of the money in Fearless' coat."

Hunter hurriedly took pen and paper and wrote a statement to that effect.

With difficulty the miser wrote his name below.

Then the pen fell from his stiffening fingers.

He cried out:

"Hang the dwarf! Hang the dwarf!"

He fell back and died.

Hunter turned to the dwarf.

"Come," he said.

"Where?"

"To jail, to answer for two murders."

The dwarf struggled to his feet.

With an almost superhuman effort he snapped the handkerchief that bound his wrists.

Like lightning he thrust his hand into his pocket, took out a small vial, and crushed it between his teeth.

For a second he glared fiercely at Hunter.

Then with a fiendish laugh he cried out:

"Bloodhound, the hangman's cheated!"

Then he fell all in a heap, striking the floor stone dead.

In spite of his iron nerve, the detective felt a little faint.

He drank some brandy.

Then he left the house, saying:

"Retribution!"

Having visited the police-station, and given directions to have the bodies removed from the house, he went at once to Lola's and was admitted.

Fearless, Lola, and Manette were there, and there were others.

Manette's father, Frank Fearless' sister, and Henri were there.

Mr. Levere came forward, saying:

"They tell me you know all."

"Yes."

"Are you not afraid to trust yourself here?"

"No, a truce has been declared."

"And shall be respected. I am told you have captured the arms and ammunition?"

"I have."

"And discovered everything?"

"It is true."

"I presume you will at once arrest us?"

Hunter replied significantly:

"You forget that there is a truce of twenty-four hours."

And he continued meaningly:

I have known people to reach the United States in less time than twenty-four hours. That government would not extradite those persons for a political offense."

The old man took the hint.

"Thanks," he said. "But Fearless is under indictment for burglary. That is extraditable. If he should reach the United States they would bring him back."

Hunter took from his pocket the paper on which was written the miser's confession.

"Read that," he said.

He then told them all that had happened in the house where the three bodies lay.

He continued:

"I must be going."

But at the door, he said:

"At Brown's livery stables they have very good sleighs and fast horses."

Lola sprung forward, and said:

"Will we see you no more?"

He looked at her and saw the love-light in her eyes—love born of a moment, then and there.

He pressed her hand, and answered:

"Not at present."

"But——"

"Some time."

He went away.

In a moment all became hurry and bustle.

By midnight sleighs were at the door.

Money and jewels were collected, but all else had to be left behind.

A power of attorney had been drawn, however, giving the stationer full authority to dispose of Lola's and Mr. Levere's property in Quebec and Montreal.

Then they all, including Marie and Lola, entered the sleighs and drove away from Quebec and Canada for good.

The United States were reached without trouble, and they were out of danger.

The journey from the border to New York was easy and quick.

No trouble was experienced by Manette and

Henri—who was now one of Frank Fearless' best friends—in establishing their claim to the fortune left by their aunt.

A month thereafter there was a triple wedding.

Marie's lover in New York had waited for her, and was well rewarded.

Manette and Frank's sister were married to the men of their choice amidst great rejoicing.

Hunter did not attend the wedding, but sent his best wishes to all.

No one was arrested on account of the conspiracy.

The detective said he had been employed by the government to stamp it out, and he had done so.

There, he said, his work must end, for he did not consider that his contract called for denouncing brave and honorable men, and handing them over to the mercy of the government, which would be equivalent to sending them to the prison and the hangman's rope.

When the three brides went on their wedding tour, Lola was left alone.

She was consoled, however, in her loneliness by many letters from Hunter, to which she quickly replied.

And it is now regarded as a settled fact that, in the fall, there will be another wedding, at which Lola will be one of the contracting parties, and the happy groom will be THE MONTREAL DETECTIVE.

[THE END.]



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